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RENASCENCE

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Absalom, Absalom!

The Edge of Infinity

By Richard Coanda.

IF LARGENESS of theme and soundness of structure determine the greatness of an art work, a critic may be justified in pronouncing Faulkner's most difficult and most undervalued novel his masterpiece. By merging space and time to create an illusion of infinity, *Absalom, Absalom!*—mixing history with myth and fact with figure—opens gates to the spiritual world. The villainous hero is Colonel Sutpen who aspires to become God and degenerates instead into a demi-devil. Not content to be another King David—for whom Jehovah decreed: "He shall build a house to my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever"—Sutpen built his mansion in his own name and, when fire overcame it, had his line perpetuated by a Negro idiot. The Colonel's cast-off son, Charles Bon, who traded his life for paternal recognition, is a second Absalom, handsome and wayward; but Henry Sutpen, Valery Bon, and Jim Bond—each a Sutpen scion repudiated by a regal father—extend and multiply the Biblical implications. David's anguished lament over his son's death was precisely what Sutpen and his brood never uttered.

Scripture relates the triumph of a repentant king; the novel tells the destruction of a remorseless colonel. When David's altar placated divine wrath, the Lord showered mercy on the plague-ridden land; because Sutpen burned no incense, made no offering, his idiot great-grandson was loosed upon the world. The thematic differences explain in part the contrast in narrative method. The Old Testament proceeds lucidly and linearly in chronological sequence; Faulkner's tale swirls opaquely and obliquely through the disrupted eddies of psychological time. The resulting confusion has been called simply bad writing on Faulkner's part.

Bernard De Voto announced: "When a narrative sentence has to have as many as three parentheses identifying the reference of pronouns, it signifies mere bad writing and can be justified by no psychological or esthetic principle whatever." Oscar Cargill called *Absalom, Absalom!* "a dull book, dull, dull, dull," and Graham Greene complained that "all Mr. Faulkner's narrators speak in the same bastard poetic prose." The structural technique which Faulkner describes as "writing on the oblique, seein' the thing through reflections," Clifton Fadiman denounced as a method of "Anti-Narrative, a set of complex devices used to keep the story from being told . . . as if a child were to go to work on it with a pair of shears." And Granville Hicks accused Faulkner of "inventing his stories in the regular form and then recasting them in some distorted form."

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But his manner and message so merge in their whirl around the axis of reality that Faulkner could hardly have dreamed the Sutpen story much differently from the way he presents it: in a contorted, elliptical, deliberately asymmetric spiralling movement out and out into infinity. His approach, in short, is like the Jacobean essayists' who fused in prose the techniques of baroque and mannerist art. Whereas Morris W. Croll calls them baroque, Wiley Sypher insists they are essentially mannerist or pre-baroque. Faulkner's style is like Bacon's precise, like Hobbes' tenacious, morbid like Taylor's, ingenious like Donne's, involute like Browne's, has a momentum like Burton's, and duplicates or adapts in prose the "mannerist" techniques recently declared to be characteristic of such painters as Tintoretto and El Greco: mobile point of view (the multiple narrators—Rosa, Mr. Compson, Quentin, and Shreve); disproportion, imbalance, excess within rigid boundaries (Rosa's static rage); shifting levels of statement (Quentin's ambiguity and ambivalence); tensions accommodated rather than resolved (Sutpen's casuistry and Quentin's pity). Baroque techniques such as those perfected by Rembrandt and Velazquez can also be detected: redundancy (Shreve's and Rosa's repetitions); a kinetic energy which materializes spirit and spiritualizes matter (Henry's flesh and Sutpen's ghost); an elevated center of gravity (Rosa's feet do not touch the floor); flashing color (the lurid tableaux); and a massive architectural balance (Rosa's last monolog is the mid-point and fulcrum of the book). Mannerist art, as Sypher describes it, is unstable, involved, ingenious, capricious, equivocal, tormented, obscure; its techniques dramatize a troubled psychology by plunging the viewer into introspective space, by operating outward from the whirlpool within. Baroque art is grandiose, exuberant, dynamic, sensuous, willful, massive, majestic, dogmatic; it stimulates us not to think but to feel; by an alternation of closures and expansions, negations and affirmations, it creates the illusion of infinity.

Like a Jacobean prose master Faulkner blends both baroque and mannerist traits, mass and energy, dogmatism and uncertainty, in order to portray, not a static thought, but the motion of a thinking mind. Quentin's mind, for example: *"Am I going to have to hear it all over again he thought I am going to have to hear it all over again I am already hearing it all over again I am listening to it all over again I shall have to never listen to anything else but this again forever so apparently not only a man never outlives his father but not even his friends and acquaintances do . . ."* Henry James achieved a similar effect by thinking his later novels aloud before an amanuensis. Faulkner knows, with Morris W. Croll, that "an idea separated from the act of experiencing it is not the idea that was experienced." Thus "metaphysically" extended metaphor unifies the novel as if it were a seventeenth or twentieth century poem: Rosa's life is a dark womb-like corridor; Sutpen's wife Ellen is a swamp-hatched butterfly; Sutpen is both an ogreish demon and a Jehovah descended to earth. The purpose of these and

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such other metaphysical techniques as paradox, irony, hyperbole, and surprise is to unify the whole of experience, and their justification is that the whole of the elaboration, as T. E. Hulme said, is necessary "to get out the exact curve of the feeling or thing you want to express."

FAULKNER'S luxuriance, as Conrad Aiken said, is like a jungle of creepers and blooms taking shape before your eyes, "coil sliding over coil, and leaf and flower magically interchanging," and the reason is that he is trying to tell us "everything, absolutely everything . . . in one terrifically concentrated effort" with each sentence a microcosm and the whole book a continuum, fugue-like in structure, without beginning or end. The twists and swirls of his idiom are appropriate to mood (horror, outrage, pity) and to meaning (the gradual break-up of a world) as well. Whether you call it elevated realism, Gothic romanticism or twentieth-century baroque, his style remains unmistakable and sustained, running up and down the emotional scale with rich changes of key, from the lopsided, shrill invertebrate monotone of the beginning to the concluding high-pitched shriek. The surging rhythm of his prose, making for deep realization as well as surprise, impact as well as breadth, creates parenthetical suspensions whose sweep accommodates the confusions of consciousness, as, for example, in the 277-word periodic sentence which concludes, after a long parenthesis:

The face, the smallest face in the company, watching him across the table with still and curious and profound intensity as though she actually had some intimation gained from that rapport with the fluid cradle of events (time) which she had acquired and cultivated by listening behind closed doors not to what she heard there, but by becoming supine and receptive, incapable of either discrimination or opinion or incredulity, listening to the prefever's temperature of disaster, which makes soothsayers and sometimes makes them right, and of the future catastrophe in which the ogre-face of her childhood would apparently vanish so completely that she would agree to marry the late owner of it.

This passage—filled with soothsaying, fluidity, and the sound of a temperature—not only supports the dominant image of the book, the foetus image (the fluid cradle is the womb), but obliquely instructs us in the art of reading the novel. It is a mistake, for example, to puzzle intensely as many critics do about the reference of pronouns in the first reading or the convoluted syntax. Receptivity is the virtue needed to sound the pulse of disaster.

Faulkner was not the first to attempt expressing all reality in a single instant. James, Conrad, Proust, Joyce, and scores of others contributed to the rise of soul-probing fiction. Affirming his habit of perception, his personal conviction of the shape life has, the writer mixes borrowed techniques with ones untried in order to set new limits to the human horizon. Faulkner owes something to Conrad, whose works lend three structural devices to *Absalom, Absalom!* The incanta-

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tory repetition, the telling and retelling of an event so that its meaning and emotive power build up terrifically, had forged the panoramic *Nostromo* into a unified pattern. The use of interrupted dialog which resumes after an expository suspension the length of one or more chapters had supplied suspense and intensity to *Under Western Eyes*. And intricate cross-chronology, with the story moving in space from narrator to narrator and shifting backward and forward in time, had given life and complexity to *Lord Jim*. The multiple narrators derive from Henry James's reflector technique, in which lesser characters illuminate and are illuminated by the central personage, who is revealed to us through their eyes: Rosa misrepresents Sutpen with spinsterish rage; Mr. Compson leaves the story half-told; Quentin, with brooding contrition, and Shreve, with cold childlike curiosity, imaginatively recreate the story from inert recorded and unrecorded facts, mixing data with hypothesis until myth is undistinguishable from reality and the tale assumes a grandeur larger than life.

THE quick play of suggestive motifs and the introduction of unexpected discords prepare the reader's mind for momentous revelations, in the acceptance of which is justified the dominant Faulknerian technique which Aiken described as "the whole elaborate method of *deliberately withheld meaning*, of progressive and partial and delayed disclosure," and which William Troy characterized as the pattern of imagination rather than logic, the pyramiding "order of ascending horror." The events are told as they were imaginatively or psychologically realized by the spectators or narrators. It is as if Morison or Commager or Nevins were to write history not as they think it happened but as they at different times thought it happened in their difficult and progressive unfolding of research, when misconception was replaced by fact which in turn was eclipsed by a larger, brighter, more shattering fact. The rush to tell "everything, absolutely everything," every source and quality and possible future, makes breathless the haste so that the characters cry "Wait wait for God's sake wait" until Faulkner stops and backs up and starts over again like Sutpen "with at least some regard for cause and effect even if none for logical sequence and continuity." The sentences and the digressions become so lengthy that Rosa has to justify Faulkner's style by asserting "*there are some things for which three words are three too many, and three thousand that many words too less, and this is one of them.*" The technique of narrative discontinuity, far from impeding the reader, immerses him in the stream of experience, for like the characters he does not understand the plot until the last word, like the last piece in a puzzle, has slid into place, whereupon the realization of horror piled on horror overwhelms his already strained sensibilities so that, having merged himself with every character and object in the tale, he feels he has lived, palpitant with flaking consciousness, through the disintegration of mankind.

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This prolonged shuffle of confusions and delays is intended, as Aiken said, "simply to keep the form—and the idea—fluid, unfinished, still in motion, as it were, and unknown, until the dropping into place of the very last syllable." This method, employed small and large in the book, within stories within stories within the story, arises from an imitation not of the way life is normally lived but of the way life is learned about or remembered or the way it is sometimes experienced, under such stress that the essentials are obliterated or obscured and only the distractions are recorded by the sensory apparatus. Such a method, as the ghost stories of Henry James illustrate, leads naturally to the calculated pattern of shocks of impact rising along the line of pyramiding horror. It is like cutting off the cat's tail an inch at a time and not stopping at the tail. The reader is kept in the dark like a man travelling through thick vegetation with only fireflies and starlight for illumination until lightning illumines the surrounding horrors which intensify with each flash until the final thunderbolt electrifies a branch above his head so that he apprehends in the glare as the timber is about to strike that he is not in a forest as he had thought but in a swamp inhabited by poisonous reptiles.

His mind a photographic plate receiving a succession of precise images, the reader is kept in the same dark that Quentin's father thought Henry was in when Bon took him to New Orleans, the dark that Quentin's grandfather was in while Sutpen sat examining his conscience, when Grandfather didn't know what Sutpen was talking about, "what choice he was talking about even what second choice he was faced with until the very last word he spoke before he got up and put on his hat and shook Grandfather's left hand and rode away;" the choice here being whether or not to tell his son Henry that Bon cannot marry Henry's sister Judith—not because Bon has an octaroon mistress and a child, nor because Bon and Judith are brother and sister, but because Bon has in him a drop of Negro blood. Horror at the miscegenation which threatened to wreck his dynastic "design" made Sutpen grow in evil until he was capable of sending one son to murder another, and self-realization, if it occurred at all, was delayed until the wordless instant when he saw Wash Jones with his rusty scythe grimly about to reap him. Sutpen's growth in evil motivates the closures and expansions of the book: first we accept him as ogreish demon (from Rosa), then as god-like superman (from Mr. Compson), finally (from Quentin and Shreve) as a misguided dynast who fell because he failed to love anyone or anything more than his Faustian ambition.

LIKE THE compulsive behavior, the disrupted time structure links this with such other Gothic-yet-more-than-Gothic romances as Chrétien's *Lancelot* and Kafka's *Castle* and augments the dreamlike quality which these tales also share. Rosa's monolog expresses the paradox of timeless duration: "It (the talking, the

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telling) seemed (to him, to Quentin) to partake of that logic- and reason-flouting quality of a dream which the sleeper knows must have occurred, stillborn and complete, in a second, yet the very quality upon which it must depend to move the dreamer (verisimilitude) to credulity—horror or pleasure or amazement—depends as completely upon a formal recognition of and acceptance of elapsed and yet-elapsing time as music or a printed tale.” Comparing the story itself to a stillborn infant underscores the dominant child-in-womb image. Numerous births and rebirths populate the book. The characters struggle to emerge from or just as violently to return to the prison of the womb. Sutpen builds a mansion, Bon wants his sister, Mr. Coldfield immures himself in his attic. The women of the novel are reborn when they attain adulthood and become ghosts (Ellen on her wedding day, Rosa at Sutpen’s proposal, Judith after she meets Bon—birth imagery is very strong here); the men are reborn when they die and become ghosts. Sutpen, unregenerate, is reborn damned: his ghost appears enclosed in the effluvium of hell; Quentin and Shreve call him a demon and picture him chatting in hellfire with his murderer. Quentin knows “*why God let us lose the War: that only through the blood of our men and the tears of our women could He stay this demon and efface his name and lineage from the earth.*” Shreve knows the lineage was not effaced and that it threatens to overrun the world.

Because the characters are nightmarish, the time-lapse, too, partakes of “that logic- and reason-flouting quality of a dream.” Through the skillful juxtaposition of past times in a series of tableaux creating the illusion of static but powerful immediacy, the reader experiences all the events before him “spatially” in an instant of time—the old-as-*Beowulf* technique which Joseph Frank called “spatial form.” Quentin’s disdain of clocks in *The Sound and the Fury* applies to Sutpen’s history as well: clocks are brute assertive instruments which measure not time but their own mechanism in absurd disregard of human consciousness. Time to the human mind is a continuous present; and to the artist, as well as to the idiot or lunatic mind, to say nothing of the eye of God, it is a simultaneous present. Faulkner’s “dream-like” style is a method, only partially new, capable of embodying this truth.

GR^{EAT} works, said T. S. Eliot, communicate before they are understood; *Absalom, Absalom!* has for years so communicated. Cleanth Brooks, I think, came closest to understanding it when he said Sutpen’s “innocence” was that of modern man: “He is rationalistic and scientific, not traditional, not religious, not even superstitious.” Rows of statistics or cold facts cannot sum him up: “mere facts are always meaningless. We can understand them only by understanding the man involved, and we cannot understand that man unless we understand Man. Faulkner’s conception of Man is fundamentally the orthodox

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conception. It can be subsumed under the old terms of original sin, grace, and expiation." Of course, Faulkner displays in his novels no sympathy for organized religion; yet his view of man is Christian and dualistic—man as neither beast nor angel but as composite somewhere between—and if this view is right the rest of his vision succeeds accordingly.

This novel is *tragic* because it is "an imitation of an action of high importance . . . by means of pity and fear effecting its purgation of these emotions." Its hero is a man "above the normal" who falls through error. Sutpen falls lower than Lear, is as evil as Macbeth and as untrustworthy as Coriolanus: he won a warrant for valor and betrayed his children, his wives, himself, Wash Jones, and even his country—when he put the safety of his tombstones above the safety of his troops. Like Captain Ahab who with monomaniacal singleness of purpose tried to make himself a god, Sutpen becomes Sathanas; like Roger Chillingworth he sins unpardonably and becomes a fiend; a Jehovah in reverse, he sends Henry like an unholy ghost to murder Bon, his firstborn whose very name means "good." Judith and Clytie work angelically toward good and order but cannot check the evil which Sutpen set in motion. Because every human being is a pool, as Quentin thought, attached "by a narrow umbilical water-cord" to other pools, Sutpen's violence—in a pattern which Aristotle would recognize—sends out waves which destroy his incipient dynasty, darken the South's pale destiny, and bring ruinous Jim Bond into the world.

This is Faulkner's most compelling work. Diction, rhythm, and syntax combine with alternating viewpoint and mixed chronology to realize a complex experience by striking deep into the bedrock of reality. The surge encircles the reader, engulfs, carries away and nearly drowns him. Reader and writer soar in the grasp of an awful vision, one not sustained through all of Faulkner's work but which, while it lasts, is irresistible. When his cousin Sally Murry Williams asked him "Bill, when you write those things, are you drinkin'?" Faulkner replied, "Not always." But in *Absalom, Absalom!* the intoxication is pervasive.

The Priest in an Age of Psychology:

An Enquiry For Novelists

By Neville Braybrooke

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to maintain a neutral attitude towards the priest; by his very calling he must either attract or repel. In society, he may serve as a scapegoat or he may become the beloved shepherd of his flock; he may draw confidences to himself as easily as insults; he may arouse feelings of *guilt*. The concept of guilt immediately brings to mind the psychiatrist, whose influence today is pervasive. Indeed, as the eighteenth century was called an Age of Reason, so perhaps might the present century be called an Age of Psychology—a definition far nearer the mark than any newspaper headlines about an Atomic Era. For in the end, mind always proves to be superior to matter, just as "all argument proves to be ultimately theological." And behind the psychiatrists hovers the presence of Manning, fluttering in his red robes, while the halls of seminaries, smelling of beeswax and oil, reverberate with his dictum that a course in Dickens is as necessary for their students as a course in Aquinas. When W. H. Auden a few years ago first spoke of "the real world of theology and horses" there was forged a link between cardinal and poet such as also exists between priest, psychiatrist, and novelist.

By referring to Dickens' novels as "a complete course of moral theology," Cardinal Manning was underlining the reality which lay behind them, of words being used as servants of the vision, of words being finally no more than servants of the Word. A novelist must needs write the truth as a priest must preach it—though on occasion each might invade the territory of the other. Yet by this none is the poorer; the truth is only made more manifest. Similarly nowadays the psychiatrist may seem to invade the territory of the priest; there are obvious resemblances between the consulting room and the confessional. Again, by this neither is the loser. For example, when the psychiatrist tries to remove the burden of guilt from his patient (a process known as "a transference" in psychological terms), the act may stir dark memories for an individual: a shadowed church and the echoing voice, "He died for you, He died for me—for your sins, my sins . . ." Such is the case perhaps with the lapsed believer; yet even with the non-believer, or the man who has so far not been encompassed directly by the problem of belief, there are memories stir-

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ring—race-memories. Here it may be enough to observe that the words "patient" and "penitent" are not unlike and that "guilt" frequently proves to be a synonym for "sin." So, from one point of view, it might be said that the greatest act of "transference" took place on a cross.

To speak thus, however, is to emphasize exactly how pervasive has been the influence of psychology on language. Inevitably men are the children of their landscape, and novelists, reflecting the world about them, will present characters not only subject to the history and geography of their countries but flawed with the marks of their particular decade or age. While the psychiatrist may sum up these flaws as the brands of guilt, the priest may prefer to describe them as the stains of Original Sin. This may suggest too theoretical a division, for when it comes to reality there is a general blurring so that, seen at middle distance, the general landscape appears to be one where the two views merge. I simply use such a distinction to show the two main attitudes or trends of thought.

A CENTURY ago Newman referred to grace taking its effect like dew on the grass; the image is quiet and peaceful, reflecting the morning stillness of the winding lanes about Birmingham, or of the seed gently thrusting up between the grey paving-stones of some Oxford college. In contrast, Graham Greene in his novel *The End of the Affair* uses a clinical imagery, comparing the effect of grace to "the taking of an injection"; in his prose there is a contemporary feeling of knees cut on the city's asphalt, or of the deadly sting of the tsetse fly in the lawless swamps of some unmapped continent. Allowing for a century's change of idiom, the principal difference between the cardinal and the novelist as analysts of the soul remains one of approach.

Modern advertising has made men particularly conscious of any flaw in themselves: lack of protein, decaying teeth, encroaching baldness. From the huge hording of any town, figures beckon, offering for half-a-crown or fifty cents the remedy for all such defects. The hope that they inspire represents the forgotten image of the witch-doctor. Then in the popular press, confidential father-figures promise the power to overcome blushing or stammering. Their white coats carry with them a suggestion of the monastic habit. It is against such a background that the American or English novelist must work. Any character of the priest that he draws will have to be seen as well from this popularly advertised conception of "doctors in religion" as from the tradition fostered by poets like Chaucer in his sketch of the "poor parson of the towne," or by Daniel Defoe when he introduced the first Benedictine into the English novel in *Robinson Crusoe*, picturing him as "a grave, sober, pious and most religious person; exact in his life, extensive in his charity, exemplary

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in almost everything he did."

Defoe's portrait was based on the fact; the first priest in English fiction was a priest in fact, with the author merely holding up a mirror to life. He was careful to add, in the cause of justice, that it was his "opinion, perhaps as well as the opinion of others . . . that [the priest] was mistaken [in his beliefs]." Yet, just as the centuries have brought little difference to the shape of the cross or the lineaments of liturgical garments, similarly beneath the habit or soutane there have been in every age men differing from each other. In Chaucer's day, there were many frauds prepared to dress in cloaks, to put on the outward semblances of a friar in order to sell their quackery or forty-days indulgences. Modern advertising often re-echoes this practice with its many bottles whose prescriptions guarantee a refund or cure within forty days.

SUCH echoes or observations for the novelist turn to signs and symbols in the mind of the psychiatrist—though once more I simply use such a theoretical division to show the two dominant attitudes or trends of thought. Each must see deeply into the life of his day; not to do so would be to fail in his vocation. In seminaries, as in all religious houses or medical institutions, there is a noticeable cult of polishing and beeswax; and sometimes on Sundays the faithful will be harangued about those who have not come to church, about those who are still in the streets washing down their cars. It requires perhaps the psychiatrist to point out the religious significance of beeswax and oil or to draw attention to the power of race-memory; it requires perhaps the novelist to take in the scene and then unconsciously bring out by juxtaposition the ironic link between the church-goer and the car-polisher. To the latter, his car is his mount and he would groom her as a fine mare: "the real world of theology and horses" draws close.

The hell-fire sermon is growing out of date; perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it is dying because a pit with demons now strikes less terror than suggestions of everlasting loss, complete isolation, or sustained anguish. A pit and demons are too near the reality of a city under aerial bombardment to hint any longer at supernatural terrors, whereas the conception of hell as an eternal waiting-room of spiritual anguish strikes profound terror in those who have least fulfilled their potentiality and therefore fear death most. This is a religious as well as a psychological reaction; it can be described as consciousness of guilt, or of sloth in virtue, as some might call it from the pulpit. This sort of understanding of the people to whom he ministers—as persons in whom the permanently human is modified by their age and country—is necessary to priest and psychiatrist alike. Similarly, the novelist can only present a contemporary clergy if he has a grasp of what it means to be a man in this age. Otherwise he will present only a gallery of clerical stereotypes

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deriving from the nineteenth century or before, or a set of religious medicine men of no more authenticity than the beckoning white figures on posters.

Yet a serious question arises: how is the novelist to treat the seemingly uneventful life of the ordinary secular in London or New York, Boston or Birmingham? By going farther afield to the missions he may be able to tell stories in which sick calls involve shooting the rapids, or persecution forces the priest to work in secrecy and disguise. Such an expedient, however, is usually employed to compensate for a lack of psychological perception. Actually the fact that the question arises at all shows how little is understood of the crosses borne in seemingly uneventful lives. "Mine is a parish like any other," Georges Bernanos began his famous novel set in the form of *The Diary of a Country Priest*. Yet holiness is not less an adventure for this priest; holiness can be an adventure anywhere—crossing the swamps to bring the Last Sacraments, or sitting before the dying embers of a presbytery fire. Holiness can be an adventure anywhere because the perilous territories of mind and soul are always open for exploration. Holiness and wholeness go together; the world of Dickens and the world of Aquinas; the London of Queen Victoria or the sun beating over the olive trees at Aquino. Whatever the superficial changes, the priest's struggle towards holiness remains essentially the same. "For every high priest is taken from among men and is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on them that err: because he himself also is compassed with infirmity" (Hebrews, V.).

As when Defoe sketched the first portrait of a Benedictine, so in the Age of Psychology the portrayal of the priest as he exists in life remains the only approach for the novelist.

Ulysses and *Finnegans Wake*: The Explicit, the Implicit, and the Tertium Quid

By Robert Bierman

DESPITE the quasi-official nature of Stuart Gilbert's book on *Ulysses*, it has been attacked as the naive repository of a bit of James Joyce's leg-pulling, yet no critic seems to have drawn a lesson from his own criticism. The emphasis upon the esoteric level is a Stephen Dedalus interpretation of *Ulysses* and, if Joyce's irony means anything, it is a warning against getting lost in the Daedelian maze of recondite analysis.

The most immediate and obvious level of *Ulysses* is, of course, the naturalistic one. The undergraduate critical cliché distinguishes the novel from the prose tale by the chief emphasis on character in the former. In the prose story the personae are puppets to the action; in the novel, the action is dependent and centered upon the personality of the protagonist (even though that protagonist might be a helpless victim of fate); carried to its "logical" conclusion, action and incident become trivial or mechanical trappings to demonstrate the character traits of the "hero." There is no "inevitable" and "linear" story: incidents are separate, casual, and accidental, and are given a unity by the consistency of the character to himself; and the "climax" is not a predictable one in the sense that it grows out of the preceding *action* but is a demonstration of some consequence of the protagonist being what he is, which seems to give a final roundness or emphasis to his character. Such are the character and incidents of Bloom and his day.

Some detractors have questioned the stream-of-consciousness method, claiming it ineffectual because Bloom's thought processes were obviously those of Joyce.¹ One can only naively respond: well, in a work of art (not science) who else's thoughts should they be? In Stephen Dedalus' threefold division of art: lyric, epic, and dramatic, it is in the last that the artist refines himself out of existence.² But it is in *Ulysses* that Joyce actually achieves this effect

¹ *Ulysses*, as Jung has noted, is a case of deliberate schizophrenia. In comparison, the method of *Finnegans Wake* might be likened to hypnotism: the conscious mind of the creator is implanted on the unconscious mind of the dreamer—with all the implication of mutual rapport between the hypnotist and subject.

² In *Finnegans Wake*, the "Tap" is the ineluctable modality of the audible coming from the ashplant of Joyce, the blind artist ("... for while the ear, be we mike-alls or nicholists, may sometimes be inclined to believe others the eye, whether browned

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by the stream-of-consciousness method. Ostensibly the action in the average novel unfolds *as* the reader reads it, but though this gives some illusion of immediacy, most narratives are told in the *past* tense (thus: Once upon a time there *was* . . .). A greater sense of the immediate is sometimes given by use of the *first person*, but the tense usually remains past. Through the stream-of-consciousness method the reader sees the world at the *same* moment as the character himself and reacts with him; there is no intermediary between them (note that with the usual first person method of speech, even using the less obtrusive French punctuation substituted for quotation marks, the typographical hand of a third person—the artist—seems to be interjected by comparison). Joyce places his protagonist in chosen situations, but it is Bloom who reacts to them in accordance with his own nature (independent of the manipulating strings of his creator).³ More important, this stream-of-consciousness method is essential to the implications of the main symbolic level of the book.

Freud noted that with the growth of Society, the individual has had to suppress, more and more, the demands of his instincts, which has led to neuroses and psychoses. Thus for modern society, with its psychological "myths" and theology, the frontiers of adventure and danger are within the mind itself. The mental anguish and heroisms of Bloom throughout the day, especially in episodes like those of the Cyclops and Circe, become as great as the physical sufferings and adventures of the Homeric Ulysses in a more primitive and simple society. It is not Bloom, as modern man, who is held up to comparative ridicule and condemnation; the "accidental" trappings of modern society are drab in comparison with the splendor of ancient days, but beneath the

or nolensed, find it devilish hard now and again even to believe itself. Habes aures et num videbus? Habes oculos ac mannepalpabunt? Tip!") This tapping is first heard as the sound of snow on the window of the "blind" Gabriel Conroy at the end of *The Dead* (Gretta could still see the eyes of the dead Michael Furey). It is the sound of Stephen's ash plant in the Proteus chapter of *Ulysses* as he closes his eyes ("Tap with it: they do."). It is also the sound of the blind stripling piano tuner ("You're blinder nor I am, you bitch's bastard!").

³ Only in the Circe episode is the omniscient consciousness *emphasized*: on p. 486 (Modern Library edition) when Bloom's thoughts are being dramatized, the hollybush of Stephen's consciousness (note p. 28) is personified. Likewise on p. 562 the sound of the bells of George's church—which, of course, Stephen will have heard himself on many occasions, but whose "translation" of sound on p. 69 is made in particular relation to Bloom—is personified in Stephen's thoughts as the voice of the bracelets. It might also be noted that on pages 47 and 48, Stephen remembers a dream: "Open hallway. Street of harlots. Remember Haroun al Raschid . . . That man led me, spoke . . . The melon he had he held against my face. Smiled: creamfruit smell . . . Red carpet spread." This is repeated on p. 215, and during the dramatization of Stephen's thoughts on p. 570 where Bloom becomes: "Incog Haroun al Raschid." On p. 374, Bloom remembers: "Dreamt last night? . . . She had red slippers on. Turkish." On p. 528 in the midst of Bloom's thoughts, the Voices say: "For the Caliph Haroun al Raschid." On p. 719, Bloom kisses the ". . . plump mellow yellow smellow melons . . ." of Molly's rump. P. 765: Molly: "I'd have to get a nice pair of red slippers like those Turks with the fez used to sell . . ."

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changing appearances of the world, there are universal elements in the human personality which are the same as ever: it is the ritual, the art, that has decayed (Joyce called his book *Ulysses*—not *Odysseus*, thus indicating it as a "translation" or transliteration in later terms—which supplies the "plot" or narrative direction, as well as implying the universal indicated by the particulars).

In picturing his characters, the author must make them such and such a height; he must choose the color of their eyes, hair, etc. In the midst of conversation he must "place" them, if only in the trite posture of a man puffing his pipe with his hands behind him toward the open fire as he tells a story (Virginia Woolf, in her diaries, mentions her concern and bother with the mechanical banalities of moving the personae from place to place). The writer might select a particular set of circumstances for a variety of reasons: he has a specific person or place in mind; it is a description of himself, or a friend, etc. The "careless" will be more than momentarily annoyed by such trivialities, but the "conscious" artist might feel the need for more specific and integral reasons. Joyce needed or wanted a great deal of "control" (there is Frank O'Connor's story about Joyce's picture of Cork set in a cork frame), thus he invented "coincidental" rationale for the most trivial circumstances. Colors, organs of the body, etc. are, relatively speaking, more particularly matters of *method* than of content *per se*.⁴ As Joyce points out later, in *Finnegans Wake*, the reader must wipe his glosses with what he knows: the level of "control" is *meaning* for the scholar of *Ulysses*, but the level of the "obvious" must be rescued for the "average" reader before it is buried and confused by the critic (not the author). Only in *Finnegans Wake* do "control" and "content" become one and inseparable.

BUT IF *Finnegans Wake* is a vast repository of self-exegesis, there remains the equally difficult problem of discovering the underlying architecture of the book as a whole. Does the title, *Finnegans Wake*, serve in the same capacity as *Ulysses* did in the earlier book; or is it the four-sectional division à la the Viconian cycles, or Jung's theory of racial unconsciousness, the blueprint? Just the listing of these elements shows it to be a somewhat diverse (if not incongruous) pasticcio with which to expect an artist to unite and control the vast rambling materials of this work composed and issued piecemeal over a period of seventeen years (and which, we are astonished to find in Joyce's letters, he once considered turning over to another writer for com-

⁴ For generations, critics have searched like archaeologists to discover, and proudly expose to the light of day, that so and so in such and such a novel was really the author's second cousin's step-father's half-brother—without criticizing the writer for obscurantism and obfuscation in "hiding" the fact. Yet Joyce who "exposes" his creative method is, paradoxically, accused of being recondite and ambiguous.

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pletion). Vico and Jung can only serve as abstract guides (compared with the particularized adventures of the *Odyssey*), and the ballad of "Finnegan's Wake" has obviously narrow limitations as a concrete correlative. (In a letter to Frank Budgen, dated Sept. 9, 1937, Joyce wrote that "The encounter between my father and a tramp" is "(the basis of my book) . . ." But one thing these elements do show (again): Joyce's juxtaposition of the intellectual and the esoteric with the mundane and even ludicrous. With this in mind, a letter of his to Sylvia Beach (July 25, 1925) has far reaching implications: "I suppose you did not get a copy of the York, Towneley and Chester Mystery plays for me? I have some of them somewhere." On Jan. 13, 1925, he had already announced to Harriet Shaw Weaver: "I cannot find anything at present about Noah's wife (the medieval figure of the mystery plays is one of the models for Anna Livia) . . ."

These cosmic cycles began with the celebration of Corpus Christi on the *Thursday* after Trinity Sunday (though lesser cycles were performed on other feasts: for instance the guild of St. Anne's at Lincoln held its pageant on July 26, St. Anne's Day⁵)—the offices for which were compiled by St. Thomas Aquinas. At first there was a ceremonial procession in which the *host* was borne through the streets and displayed at various designated out-of-doors stations. The tableaux in the church, dramatizing parts of the Service, had been cosmopolitan in character, but once they had been taken outdoors they became national and parochial, with the vernacular creeping in as well as a note of realism and coarse humor. Stock comic characters like Herod and Noah's wife became favorites (some authorities believe that, at times, Adam and Eve actually appeared naked on the stage). Sometimes the amateur actors did not learn their parts and prompters whispered the lines which the players repeated aloud; the plays themselves were subject to frequent revisions, both to refurbish them, and because of changing conditions due to the varying numbers of craft guilds available at the time to do a scene (Noah, for example, was usually played by the shipwrights at York and Newcastle; by the watermen at Beverly and Chester; the fishers and mariners at York). A Corpus Christi guild account for 1539, according to E. K. Chambers in *The Medieval Stage*, lists the cash for ". . . the Marie for her gloves and wages. . ."; in 1544: "a new coat and a pair of hose for Gabriell." Scenes were on wagons. The Paradise play at Beverly in 1391 used the following equipment: a "karre," eight hasps, eighteen staples, two vizors, a pair of wings for the angel, a fir-spar (tree of

⁵ At the Feast of Fools on St. Stephen's Day at Chalons-sur-Marne, part of the sacred ceremonies were burlesqued and a Bishop of Fools was led to the porch of the church on a gaily decorated ass. As he received his vestments, the inferior clergy entered the Cathedral singing gibberish, grimacing and making contortions. Later church bells were rung and the clergy appeared in grotesque costumes.

knowledge), a worm (the serpent), two pairs of linen breeches, two pairs of shifts, and one sword. Hellmouth usually had a fire, a windlass, and a barrel for earthquakes.

The cycles were long (twenty-five at Chester; forty-eight at York), and time was saved by performing an early play at one station (for example: *The Creation of ye worlde*) coincident with a later play (perhaps: *Noah and His Shipp*) at another (the stations marked by banners embroidered with the arms of the city). At Coventry there were *three* or *four* stations; at York: twelve to sixteen. Each scene was repeated at the various stations in different parts of the city; this took over three days at Chester (one day at York beginning at 4:30 a.m.)

HERE then is a concrete and workable translation of Vico and Jung, coming out of Joyce's own Catholic background, which offers the maximum freedom in handling, not only the incongruous personae of the book (average workmen in the guise of cosmic heroes like Lucifer, Adam, and Noah), and the holy and heroic themes in terms sometimes profane and ludicrous, but also the coexistence of all history.⁶ With the Creation occurring at one station, while the Fall was simultaneously occurring at another, and Noah in his ark at yet another, and all these cosmic events occurring against a background—and for an audience—that was contemporary, time becomes translated into (more controllable) space (note that the Once upon a time of *The Portrait* becomes: Eins within a space on p. 152 of *F.W.*). Thus the time (Thursday after Trinity Sunday), the place (the rocky road to Dublin), and the occasion of the Wake (Corpus [body] Christi [of Christ]) is set. And perhaps the pageant is the one mentioned in *The Chain Book of the City of Dublin* for the Corpus Christi feast of 1498:

⁶ The existence of an interior critique has led to an abortive attempt to make another *Oracles of Nostradamus* out of *Finnegans Wake* in which every commentator can "prove" his pet theory by citing chapter and verse. For those who enjoy such bibliomania there are, of course, ample references in the present case:

"... from good start to happy finish the truly catholic assemblage gathered together in that king's treat house of satin alustrelike above floats and footlights from their assbawlveldts and oxgangs unanimously to clapplaud (the inspiration of his lifetime and the hits of their careers) Mr. Wallenstein Washington Semperkelly's immergreen tourers in a command performance by special request with the courteous permission for pious purposes the homedromed and enliveneth performance of the problem passion play of the milllentury, running strong since creation . . ."

"... as it was foretold of him by a timekiller to his spacemaker, velos ambos and arubyat, knychts, with their tales within wheels and stuck between spokes, on the hike from Elmstree to Stene and back . . ."

There are also references on pages: 12, 20, 53, all of 55, 359, 553, 569, 604, 615, Viking Press edition. The guilds are the recurring nursery refrain: "Hootch is for husbandman handling his hoe" (Adam); "Rutsch is for rutterman ramping his roe . . ." (Noah); "Batch is for Baker who baxters our bread" (Christ).

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- Glovers: Adam & Eve, with an angell followyng berryng a swerde.
- Corvisers: Caym and Abell, with an auter and the ofference.
- Maryners, Vynters, Shipcarpynderis, and Samountakers: Noe, with his shipp, apparalid acordyng.
- Wevers: Abraham [and] Ysack, with ther auter and a lambe and ther ofference.
- Smythis, Shermen, Bakers, Sclateris, Cokes and Masonys: Pharo, with his hoste.
- Smynners, House-Carpynders, and Tanners, and Browders: for the body of the camell, and Oure Lady and hir chile well aperlid, with Joseph to lede the camell, and Moyses with the children of Israell, and the Portors to berr the camell. Peyn, xl.s. and Steyners and Peyntors to peynte the bede of the camell.
- [Goldsmys] this: The three kynges of Collynn, ridyng worshupfully, with the offerance, with a sterr afor them.
- [Hoopers]: the shep[er]dis, with an Angill syngyng Gloria in excelsis Deo.
- Corpus Christi yild: Criste in his Passioun, with thre Mories, and angilis berring serges of wex in ther hands.
- Taylors: Pilate, with his fellasship, and his lady and his knyghtes, well beseyne.
- Barbors: An[nas] and Caiphas, well araied acordyng.
- Courteours: Arthure, with knyghtes.
- Fissbers: The Twelve Apostelis.
- Marchauntes: The Prophetis.
- Bouchers: tormentours, with there garmentis well and clenly peynted.
- The Maire of the Bulring and bachelers of the same: The Nine Worthies ridyng worshupfully, with ther followers accordyng.
- The Hagardmen and the husbandmen to berr the dragoun and to repaire the dragoun a Seint Georges day and Corpus Christi day.

A Note on the Reputation of Narrative

By Sister Mary Francis.

EVERY critic, Pope tells us, "fain would be upon the laughing side," and in late years a polite muted laughter has hinted that narrative literature is "naive." Robert Langbaum calls our "Literature of action" "popular" as distinguished from "our high literature." Many modern critics agree with John Stuart Mill, who thought that interest in plot and story "merely as a story characterizes rude stages of society, children, and the 'shallowest and emptiest' of civilized adults." When Suzanne Langer says in an article in the *Hudson Review* (III, pp. 230-231) that the narrative device is "probably the first to beget literature at all" and that "the verbal problem . . . becomes much simpler where narrative holds the total structure together," her remarks, although by no means intended to belittle the art of narrative, have nevertheless the post-Mill tone.

Our poets do not narrate, as poets once did. Delmore Schwartz, in an essay on Dos Passos, observes that "modern poetic style can bear the utmost strain of sensibility, but it cannot tell a story." Plot, which began to be eliminated even from the novel in the work of Crane and Chekhov, did not gain with Wells, Proust, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce. Even when, like Doctor O'Connor in *Nightwood*, some modern novelists claim to "have a narrative," "you will be put to it to find it."

The nature of the dynamic reference of plot was explained by Aristotle and well understood by "the succeeding centuries," and it is still clear to some writers (see, e.g. Brooks and Warren, *Understanding Fiction*; Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*). But prominent critics for quite a while have been saying things which, if not a betrayal of obscurity of concept of "plot" in their own minds, at least tend to obscure the concept in others. Schlegel's stress upon reference to "indirect and secret subjectivity" in the *novella* is an instance; Lessing's persistent praise of the "progressive actions" in Homer, with examples which are static references to motion rather than the dynamic reference of plot, might be another. I mention this to contrast Lessing with Pope who, noticing the static references to motion, also notices the dynamic reference. In *The Heresy of Plot*, Reuben Brower points out that the modern critic "will not have much to do" "with plot as a composition of incidents, though he grants that the notion has a limited usefulness for a playwright." At present, Suzanne Langer indicates, "the reconstructions of life" by a person's memory are a source from which narrative is likely to be originated, an explanation which could do damage to a clear understanding of the narrative art. Again, the mental process of analogy tempts

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critics to ascribe plot to single metaphors and to lyric (Kenner *The Poetry of Ezra Pound*, p. 88; Olson in *Critics and Criticism*, pp. 563-6). And Suzanne Langer's fixing upon "a virtual Past" as "the primary illusion of literature" created by "story" could narrow the idea of narrative unduly for less discriminating readers.

As a matter of fact, our word "plot" has been detrimental to our theory generally, and the more wary of our critics usually put it in quotation marks. Suzanne Langer says, for instance, "Even a simple narrative is such an organizing force that we usually speak of it as the 'plot,' i.e. the ground plan of the work in which utilized. Where the principle of narration enters into poetic structure all other devices have to adjust themselves." The same isolation of plot is found in the words of Dorothy Van Ghent in *English Novel, Form and Function*:

The total architecture of a novel involves a great deal more than plot, and we have to have some word for that architecture. The word "structure" will do, and we shall distinguish structure, then, from the narrative arrangement of episodes, the plot, plot being but one element among the many that constitute a structure. *Tom Jones* has a far more elaborate plot than any we have yet encountered . . . elaborate not only in the sense that the book contains an immense number of episodes, but also in the sense that all these episodes are knit . . . into a large single action obeying a single impulse from start to finish . . .

And again: "Tom goes under and up Fortune's wheel from 'low' to 'high' . . . But in order that the action may evolve its curve, the wicked Blifil is needed . . ."

Obviously, both Suzanne Langer and Dorothy Van Ghent have a clear understanding of the inseparable involvement of plot in the literary structure. That is plain from their self-conscious use of the word—"we usually speak of it as," and, "we have to have some word for" the broader concept to distinguish it from "plot." Moreover, few people have put the word "plot" to more intelligent use than Dorothy Van Ghent, and the points I am making here have long been beautifully clear to her, I suspect. Nevertheless, to keep the idea at the degree of refinement indispensable to its survival, it seems wise to call attention to two facts in connection with the above quotations from both writers.

One is that this "ground plan of the work," this "narrative arrangement of episodes" is something in *our minds*, having been momentarily abstracted by them for convenience from the entity which is the literary object; just as, of this abstracted plot, "its curve" is a direction perceived by our mind abstracting or isolating the direction, the better to notice it. But in reality, in the literary object, the elements that we mentally isolated are not isolated; they are elements of the chemical compound of the object. The whole structure is dynamic, so that those elements of the structure that we did not abstract *are it* too. The cause-and-effect principle leavens every word and comma of it, and every deleting. The "bare bones of the changes in dramatic relationships," as Brower terms plot,

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are "bare" while the abstracting mind of the critic momentarily X-rays the play.

Secondly, what "we usually speak of as the 'plot'" Suzanne Langer says is "an organizing force"; the "single action" into which all the "episodes are knit" is obedient to what Dorothy Van Ghent calls "a single impulse from start to finish." The "force" and "impulse" are not actualized though, until the process of reading and responding. What we have in our hands is a book of pages on which certain calculated words are printed in a calculated sequence. We recognize their meaning and respond, with alternating of curiosity, suspense, and satisfaction perhaps. "Form" is "the character of an object as experienced," according to Shipley's *Dictionary of World Literature*, and Wellek and Warren describe the literary work as a potential cause of experiences, a structure of norms only partially realized in the actual experience of its readers.

The "plot" by itself, in other words, is not the "force" or "impulse." It causes or rather occasions impulses in us. It is important to say this in case we might be inclined to conceive of plot as a blind and elemental thing which could not help but happen, and which sweeps along with it all the things that we might think are not itself. Such a conception of it strengthens the too prevalent idea that narrative is somehow primitive, "popular," something not requiring subtlety or skill in the maker.

Those who have described narrative as the source of pleasure in literature—Aristotle, for instance—have been neither babies nor barbarians. Aristotle, of course, if not the heretic whom Brower charges with "the heresy of plot," is obviously guilty by association. The heresy of plot "is the notion that in a poem or a play or a novel there is an order of events that may be thought of in complete isolation from other structures and that 'somehow' exists independent of the language of the work." That the order of events "may be thought of" in isolation is quite consistent with Aristotle's psychology. The independent *existence* of the plot is another matter, clearly foreign to Aristotle. It is not too digressive to mention incidentally that Brower's interest in his experiment of critical reading for metaphorical meaning, which resulted in his eminently successful *Fields of Light*, led him in "The Heresy of Plot" to exaggerate Aristotle's stress upon plot, his "little or no concern about" words and "silence about language"; to mistake predication for definition and to overlook the conditions imposed by Aristotle's method. Aristotle observed *about tragedy*, at any rate, that it is "by the very structure and incidents of the play" that the tragic emotions are aroused (*Poetics* xiv, 1-2). Samuel Johnson in his life of Butler says "We love to expect; and when expectation is disappointed or gratified, we want to be again expecting." Henry James's civilized mind was contented to find, in his preface to *The Aliar of the Dead*, that "the story is our excitement, our amusement, our thrill and our suspense; the human motion and the human attestation, the clustering human conditions we expect presented, only make it." Few

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people alive have the sophistication of Chaucer, and Chaucer cultivated to a degree of astonishing perfection the art of narrative. Among other things, he wrote a good bit of romance, with gusto and supreme control. "The art of the romancer is, 'for the fun of it,' insidiously to cut the cable" that ties "the balloon of experience" to earth, "to cut it without our detecting him," says Henry James, quite unabashed, in the preface to *The American*. It does not occur to James to condemn romance for naïveté, although the prejudice was well known to him.

To the degree that the "story" is a source of pleasure in the reading, it demands deft manipulation on the part of the narrator. James says in the preface to *Roderick Hudson* that he found himself in the "perpetual predicament that the continuity of things is the whole matter . . . of comedy and tragedy" and admitted that the artist "has at once intensely to consult and intensely to ignore it," to "arrive" at "a stopping place" by a difficult, dire process of selection . . . surrender and sacrifice." According to his Prefaces, the narrative art of his own novels took all the refinement of ingenuity and judgment possible to him. In tragedy too, the narrative structure requires delicate art. Aristotle tells us that "beginners succeed earlier with the Diction and Characters than with the construction of a story; and the same may be said of nearly all the early dramatists."

Our appreciation of the valuable contributions of modern criticism to knowledge issues from the same source as our appreciation of the contributions of the ancients. Disciplines other than those of philology have undergone their changes too, and one of the resulting difficulties is that critics discussing literature have a variety of preliminary assumptions, or even consciously adopted convictions. Brower says that "the growth of critical intelligence . . . comes . . . from feeling our way and fitting our theories to what we must say at our moment in history." It is doubtful whether he means that history is an entity which relentlessly determines our utterances; the implication is rather, I think, that the growing collective awareness of critics determines it. And so it does. However, the objective reality of the literature we are evaluating takes precedence even over that, and if there are bones at all that can be bared, they, like all the rest of the reality, must be taken into account. Once this has been done, of course, the next question will be: does the form of these make any difference, or is one arrangement as good as another?

Review - Articles

French Letters Today

The Contemporary French Novel. By Henri Peyre. Oxford University Press. \$5.00.

An Age of Fiction: The French Novel from Gide to Camus. By Germaine Brée and Margaret Guitton. Rutgers University Press. \$5.00.

Panorama Critique des Nouveaux Poètes Français. By Jean Rousselot. Paris: Pierre Seghers.

THESE are three books to be welcomed alike by students, teachers, and all lovers of twentieth century French literature. The field is vast, on the whole uncharted as to the most recent period, and the reader in need of guidance, in his study both of the novel and of poetry.

It is interesting to read and compare the two works on the novel, which discuss the same period almost all the way through, and to compare the authors' treatments of the subject and their points of view. *The Contemporary French Novel* is already a favorite reference text for American students. Here we have an exhaustive guide to the modern French novel from the European revival of 1910 to 1955. It takes up more than 100 writers, introducing to the American reader promising young authors still relatively unknown to him as well as discussing the established glories he has long been familiar with. Besides Gide and Proust we find Martin du Gard, Duhamel, Romain, Radiguet, Mauriac, Saint-Exupéry, Malraux, Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Camus. Then comes a list of ninety-three novelists who started publishing after 1945 and show promise. This is followed by a ten page list of novels with titles of English translations and publishers arranged alphabetically by authors' names, with a concise summary and comment. A specific bibliography appended to each chapter, and the general bibliography ending the volume, offer a wealth of useful references.

Let us mention particularly the essay on the novel of the last thirty years in France: the place of Existentialism in literature, the influence of the American novel, a justification of the postwar French temper as expressed in fiction, an indication of new trends in the novel seen in the works of the young generation of authors.

In his introduction Peyre proposes to give an answer to these questions: "Who are the significant novelists in France today? What important works of fiction should one read? What works should one recommend to students who wish to remain informed? What revelations of the mood of French people can be obtained? . . . What trends in technique and psychology are discernible . . .?" His answer, he warns the reader, may not always be objective, as literary criticism cannot be that and have any value. This answer, although necessarily technical, is given in a language accessible to the layman and not in "cultivated abstruseness and pedantic jargon."

Following the French tradition since classical time, and more than ever before, the novel is "a work of moralists more than storytellers, of seekers of wisdom more than of creators of characters. It aims at increasing the reader's understanding of life, at sharpening his lucidity and his sincerity: indeed, with

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all its pessimism, it has enhanced the Frenchman's zest for living a life which authors have depicted as sombre, bristling with hostile temptations, unprotected by any Providence, but the more exhilarating for all that." Most French people see in literature a means of increasing man's knowledge of man. It must enable the reader to act with a better understanding and with more sincerity. The novelist of today in exposing the truth in us is "a worthy successor to the priest and to the moralist." Pessimistic on the whole, and perhaps justly so, the French novel of today, whether Catholic or agnostic, has steeled the soul to bear evils with fortitude.

In his conclusion Peyre states that the novel of today is clear-sighted, sincere, well-aware that man is more anxious about "transcending himself, if not vertically towards God, at least horizontally toward other men." Love of life and love of literature survive as the last bulwark of intellectual freedom, and "of the noble humanist and Christian ideal of fraternity."

In this stimulating text, always clear, rendered easy to follow and to enjoy by the complete and lively expositions of the works discussed, let us mention as of special interest to us the essay on Mauriac. It gives also an objective view of the Roman Catholic novel and sidelights on other Catholic novelists. Above all it is a literary analysis rendering tribute to Mauriac the moralist exploring the human heart in its darkest recesses and the perilous forces of passion, and to Mauriac the poet in his creations.

In his review of this text V. S. Prichett singles out the gift for guidance Peyre shows once more, and we can but agree with him.

An Age of Fiction requires the reader to be well versed in the contemporary French novel for full understanding and appreciation. It takes up the work of twenty novelists ranging from the period between the two wars to the present day. To explore this vast field and to bring some order into it the authors have grouped their selection under the following headings: "The Masters," "Gide and Proust," "Brave New Worlds" (Duhamel, Romain, Martin du Gard, Aragon, Aymé), "Private Worlds" taking up the Roman Catholic novelists, Green, Mauriac, Bernanos, as well as Giono's and Bosco's works, "Escapes and Escapades" treating the Surrealist anti-novel, Cocteau, Giraudoux, Céline, and Queneau, "Return to Man" bringing us up to Malraux, Saint-Exupéry, Sartre, and Camus.

The novel during this period of general upheaval, of re-examination and restatement of fundamental values, has become the principal means of expression, a rich, varied territory, never easy to investigate. The novelists' aim is to create a new image of man for their age. The novel takes on a new vitality, examining man's knowledge of himself, of the world he lives in, and of the impact of the one upon the other. It is closely related to trends in philosophy devoted to the study of man's inner consciousness of this reality "as the only knowable quantity, the only ultimate truth." Now the novel is governed by "the intellectual or esthetic requirements of the novelist who is free to indulge in any number of adventures of the imagination and the mind, the hero becomes a free agent, the novel 'the poem of the freedom of the will.'"

There is no single answer. Each writer must discover and experience for himself a new set of values. Novels are not to be considered as a practical guide to living. Fiction, differing in this way from reality, can indulge in perilous experiments and uncompromising attitudes. The problem is often so vital to the

narrator that he is compelled to turn away from the form of fiction to the essay as can be seen in Saint-Exupéry's, Malraux', Sartre's, and Camus' writings.

The novel of the fifties has set aside metaphysical preoccupations and is, once again, an education. The one common aim is to base the novel on man's position in the world, "a deeper concern with discovering the real nature of human life than with explaining its ultimate meaning."

The chapter entitled "The Masters" is of particular interest to students of Gide and Proust. The two critics see in Proust the greatest novelist of our day. It is to be regretted that so little place is given the Catholic novelists, especially Mauriac, as literary figures. According to the authors, Bernanos' and Mauriac's strong and weak points come from the fact "that they are unwilling to step aside and let the reader be." It is interesting to reread Henri Peyre's essay on Mauriac at this point. Both views are objective and non-sectarian.

The two authors of *An Age of Fiction* have given a brilliant insight into the history of the intellectual world of our day. At times the philosophical interpretation overshadows the literary analysis. Altogether a book not to be read lightly and somewhat above the reach of the profane.

Panorama Critique des Nouveaux Poètes Français aims to make known and understood the poetic trends of the past fifteen years. A work of this kind is a must, since poetry has once again become the concern of a small minority. Very few publications exist; very few succeed in maintaining their existence. Therefore most of us are poorly informed and need all the documentation Jean Rousset is giving in his anthology.

The author has proceeded to an objective census of the various tendencies, selecting the stronger personalities and exposing his reader to the various climates of contemporary poetry. In his introduction, Jean Rousset defines what poetry is for him: "a language, a language which would do without words if it could, which does very well at any rate without reasoning reason and utilitarian disciplines; a language which, if it comes from the gods, passes through the most secret forests of mankind and dips into the warm fountains of blood, into the dream infested pools; a language which, accordingly, is not *impression* (still less explanation) but *expression*."

The young French poets had to be presented in a certain order. The new French poetry lacks a unifying trend or even a school. Therefore a few major tendencies have been set forth with no rigid delineations between them. Rousset cites a continuation of surrealism, the emotions of the working class, a nostalgia of didacticism, the negation of phrase and word, a return to the melodious Nervalian alchemy, a dry and dark humorism, and a lyrical metaphysic.

Each chapter begins with an explanation of the trend; each selection is preceded by an introduction and a commentary. Both are welcome and much needed; most of the authors are new to the average reader who is much in need of guidance. Among a host of new names one is glad to find Prévert, Queneau, Michayd, Gilson, Pierre Emmanuel, Claude Vigé, Luc Estang, Jean Cayrol, Patrice de la Tour du Pin, Desnos, Pierre Seghers, more familiar landmarks in a truly representative panorama of French poetry of today.

St. Mary's College

FRANÇOISE JANKOWSKI

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Fighting Irish

Stephen Hero. By James Joyce. Edited by John Slocum and Herbert Cahoon. New Directions. \$4.00.

Guerilla Days in Ireland. By Tom Barry. Devin-Adair. \$4.00.

SEAN O'FAOLAIN once noted that there are two kinds of Irish rebel—one who responds to an immediate injustice by taking to the pike or gun, and one who talks about liberty and freedom and has bigger fish to fry. The second of these is generally a more complex individual than the first. He sees clearly the objective he is attempting to define for others, but his tragedy is that they have not the same vision. One might make the same distinction between the authors of these two books. General Tom Barry of the Irish Republican Army wanted to expel the English from Ireland. But James Joyce wanted emancipation not only from "the imperial British state," as his mouthpiece Stephen Dedalus says, but also from "the holy Roman Catholic and apostolic church," from Ireland herself, who wanted him for odd jobs, and eventually, as it turned out, from the English language.

In explaining why he enlisted in the British army at the age of seventeen, Tom Barry indirectly explains why he subsequently became a Commandant General in the Irish Republican Army—that army without banners which succeeded in driving the English out of Ireland in 1921 after three years of irregular warfare. He had, he says, no understanding of what Home Rule meant, so he could not possibly have believed that if he fought for the British, Ireland would secure Home Rule. "I went to war for no other reason than that I wanted to see what war was like, to get a gun, to see new countries and to feel a grown man." Four years later the Great War was over; he was mustered out of the army and found himself applying to Sean Buckley of Bandon for membership in the IRA. The three years of flying columns, barrack raiding, and ambushes he describes in *Guerilla Days* are here recounted in the glow of memories that come thirty years afterwards. One finds in the book a clarity of expression—though Tom Barry is no writer—and a statement of objective that the younger man would never have been capable of. And yet one can see, I think, despite pages of earnest indignation about the English occupation, that this professional soldier was motivated more by the challenge of a hopeless cause than by a deep-seated political idealism. He drilled and trained the country boys of West Cork with efficiency and skill and left the speech-making to the politicians.

General Barry saw his objective achieved rather easily when you consider how ineffective violence usually is, and has been in Ireland especially. But the expulsion of the English was only partial, and the evil of partition remains to remind Ireland that she had to become a divided country before she could become free. Today Tom Barry is an elderly man of quiet demeanor and warm friendliness. Meeting him in Cork last year, and listening to his account of the old days of ambush and retreat, I found it hard to see in him the man who fought so bitter a guerrilla war against British troops in the hills of West Cork. Most of his contemporaries, like the late Ernie O'Malley, who wrote the best account of the troubles by a participant, or his friend James Hurley, now the registrar of University College, Cork, are gentle, friendly men with none of the bitterness about the old days that seems still to animate the speeches of some

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politicians who find it necessary to traffic in forgotten hatreds. But this is what it should be of course, for Ireland no longer has room for men of violence or hatred. She has taken her place among the nations of the earth, and the problem of partition will one day be solved not by IRA men furtively setting fire to police barracks along the northern border but by men of good will and good sense.

One is accustomed to hearing Joyce described as the arch-rebel because he managed to free himself by a desperate personal effort from the influences of home, country, and Church and parlayed what any other novelist of his time would have considered very unlikely material into one of our greatest novels of adolescence. But when one looks into the personal legend, for example to the testimony of the sister he lived with many years—"They say he was anti-Catholic, but he never missed a service during all the Holy Weeks he spent with me in Trieste"—one wonders if Gogarty's pronouncement about *Ulysses* being a "cod" would have been nearly so ridiculous if it hadn't been said about the wrong book. What would happen now to the legend if future biographers should reveal that the arch-rebel was really a little too arch? Some of the fictitious elements in the legend have already been exposed for us, such as Stephen's refusal to kneel at his mother's dying request, and the scorn he expressed for his father—a "drinker, a good fellow, a story-teller, somebody's secretary, something in a distillery, a taxgatherer, a bankrupt and at present a praiser of his own past." When one remembers the family portraits which Joyce carried with him all over Europe at great expense and trouble, as well as the hunting vest of an O'Connell great-grandfather, a cousin of the man who liberated the Catholics of Ireland, which he wore on his father's birthday, Joyce begins to look more like Aeneas carrying his household gods into distant lands than the terrible fellow of the legend.

Of course the real arch-rebel of Irish literature is not Joyce at all but Synge. Joyce was a Catholic and Synge was a Protestant, which immediately suggests vast differences. But actually the differences are illusory. Irish Protestantism is just as authoritarian and puritanical as Irish Catholicism is reputed to be, and Synge grew up in an atmosphere even more repressive than Joyce's. But he was so convinced of his own destiny and so confident of his ability to follow it that he did not have to resort to the flight, exile, or open defiance which men less sure of themselves seem to need. Nor did he need to dramatize himself with such juvenilities as Stephen Dedalus' *non serviam*. He did not see himself as Satan, or even as Parnell, though his Aunt Jane had dandled the infant Parnell on her lap and he could have identified himself with that great rebel from his own class more logically than Stephen Dedalus did. His rejection of everything his family stood for in politics as well as religion was no less real for not having been articulated. He never openly—that is, outside the family circle—repudiated the religion which was so important to his mother, or her pride of class and station, even though it was he who was swimming with the tide of historical events and not she, as it turned out. He lived with her until death, although she prayed for his return to the faith of his ancestors and lived in fear that his young nephews would be contaminated by his dangerous opinions about politics and religion.

Joyce struck back at Ireland by writing the story of his youthful revolt, but *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* bounced harmlessly off the Irish armor

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plate. It was *The Playboy* which struck home. The point of Synge's play was not that it glorified the lout who demolished the whole social structure of rural Ireland when he cleft his father from the gullet to the navel for trying to force him into marrying an older woman but that it ridiculed the "fools of Mayo" who could be delighted with the father-murderer as long as he was the hero of a "gallous" story but could not accept him when he appeared to commit the "dirty deed" before their eyes. They had only the courage of their dreams. Never has the Irish weakness for the idea over the reality been satirized so brutally. Small wonder that Irish audiences, at home and abroad, rioted at performances of the play.

But *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a great novel even though people are inclined to forget that it is about adolescence and see in it something more than Joyce intended by the full title he gave it. Young readers particularly, who see so much of themselves in young Dedalus, go on to *Ulysses* thinking that it is he and not Bloom who is the central figure in that much bigger canvas. To such Dedalians—and I have them in my classes—the great moments in *Ulysses* are Stephen spouting Latin like a sophomore in Bella Cohen's brothel or the sadness of his meeting with his sister Dilly in Bedford Row. *Ulysses* is for them the story of a son's search for a father and not, as we Bloomians believe, that of a father for a son. But like Leopold Bloom we have stopped arguing and wearily begun to nod a prudent assent.

When the late Theodore Spencer edited the text of *Stephen Hero*—an earlier draft of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*—from the manuscript in the Harvard College Library in 1944 and pointed out in an excellent preface the chief differences which distinguish it from the finished novel, he was not aware of the existence of twenty-five additional manuscript pages which have since turned up. John Slocum and Herbert Cahoon, to whom Joyceans owe so much for their indefatigable labors, have now edited the new material so that it could be included in the third edition of the book and we learn from their foreword that Slocum purchased the new material from Joyce's brother in 1950. One wonders if astute owners of the rest of the manuscript—many more pages are still missing—will turn up now from time to time as the market gets better and better. The new material is an account of Stephen's visit to his godfather Mr. Fulham in Mullingar, Westmeath. As interesting as Stephen's showing off against the provincials is, Joyce discarded it eventually and, as the editors point out, these new pages do not add any new dimensions to the character of Stephen. All that can really be said of them is that they "contain some excellent expositions of his attitudes toward religion, Irish nationalism and his countrymen." But of that, I would add, we have had quite enough already.

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DAVID H. GREENE

Book Reviews

Measuring the Giant

Hilaire Belloc. By Robert Speaight. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy. \$6.50.

ROBERT SPEAIGHT has opened the great debate on Belloc, which is an excellent function for an official biographer to perform. It must have been difficult for the people who decide these things to find an impartial moderator: people divide sharply about Belloc, largely according to temperament, blood-pressure, and digestion. (To be a confirmed Bellocian, one needs, more than anything, a strong liver and a sturdy pair of legs). Speaight has managed to remain admirably fair, a temperate but sympathetic guest at the orgy. I doubt if anybody else in the English-speaking world could have done half so well in this respect.

The result will be partly unsatisfactory to both sides. Belloc's extravagances and prejudices are ticked off in an orderly, almost schoolmasterly way, which has doubtless irritated some of his fanatical admirers already. At the same time his critics are frequently brought up short by beautiful and sensitive quotations, and by mention of actions of great tenderness and generosity. Most great writers have at least two men inside them. Belloc has been lucky to acquire a biographer who recognizes this and writes accordingly. The result is that there is almost enough Belloc displayed to attract two completely different sets of followers.

For various reasons, it is not a very intimate biography. Belloc's relations with his family—which must surely have been fascinating—are glossed over with understandable discretion. Nor does Speaight probe deeply into Belloc's psyche, which is refreshing after the recent deluge of case-histories but somewhat disappointing too. For instance, Belloc's apparent snobbery is dismissed much too lightly, in my opinion. When young Hilaire was at Balliol, all his friends were selected from the upper-classes. Speaight explains this by pointing out that the rich boys had travelled more than the others and were accordingly more entertaining as companions. Surely this is an inadequate explanation. There was a pretty interesting fellow on his own staircase called Ernest Barker (later Sir); apparently Belloc never even bothered to say "hello" to him. And during his short time in the ranks of the French army, he seems to have made no friends at all.

None of this would be important, if Belloc had not spent so much time and energy belaboring the wealthy in his writing. It is probably not too much to say that he was obsessed by the subject. I do not know the full explanation for this, but I should like to make a guess at part of it. As a boy, he was placed in a school where nearly all the boys were young Catholic aristocrats (a singularly aloof breed). I believe that he used to stand on the railway platform at the end of term with tears in his eyes while his schoolmates piled into the first-class carriages; he alone had to travel third class.

Like many artists who feel with agonizing keenness the oppressive fact of class-distinction, Belloc could never decide whether to fight the upper-classes or join them. When he reached sufficient eminence to travel first-class himself, he had not the heart to refuse. But at least he retained the comfort of deriding his

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fellow-passengers. (I believe he also used his "Frenchness" to magnificent effect in the English social circus. But perhaps this is more debatable.)

His social attitudes had a significant effect on his life. Although he had a rare independence from creature-comforts (nobody ever "roughed it" with more spontaneous enjoyment), he perpetually lived well beyond his income, and was forced accordingly to write numerous books which were hardly better than pot-boilers. It also had a significant effect on his followers. The Church in England contains a curious species of semi-snob, loosely patterned after Belloc. There is no need to mention names; any perceptive outsider will probably have run into the thing often enough to know what I mean.

Speaight is only slightly more satisfactory concerning Belloc's attitude toward the Jews. When all the exceptions in his behavior have been granted, Belloc still stands as a consistent anti-Semite; and this, too, had very serious effects. A few Catholics copied him (even, to a mild extent, the great Chesterton). But, what is more important, he helped to widen the gulf between the Church and the Jews. Because he was such a militant Catholic, it was easy for others to assume that his anti-Semitism was part of the Catholic program. In our times, and especially in the English-speaking world, it is obviously vital that the Church should avoid any reputation for intolerance or hatred. Many people need only the smallest encouragement to believe that the Church is keeping the thumb-screws and the racks in good repair, ready to bring them out again when the Great Day comes. It is a fantastic picture, but Belloc did nothing to dispel it. His fanaticism in regard to the Dreyfus case was not just a sign of faulty judgment. He was doggedly refusing to believe in a man's innocence in the face of all evidence—a very serious position for any Christian to take. It is impossible to dissociate this terrible vindictiveness from his profound anti-Semitism—and one can only wish that Speaight had told us more about the roots of that Anti-Semitism.

Perhaps I have given undue space to these omissions. In other respects the biography is admirably comprehensive. Appropriately, it deals more fully with the early years, when Belloc's opinions were forming. After the Great War, he found himself bewildered by the cataclysmic changes in the world, as did most of the other great Edwardians. Anybody who is startled by Belloc's admiration of Mussolini, and by his denunciation of democratic institutions, should pause to consider what Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells, the young moderns, were saying at that time. (Shaw's bouquets to Hitler and Stalin seem almost incredible at this distance.) As Speaight points out, not one of these men really understood the significance of, for instance, the rise of the Labor party in England, or even of communism in Russia.

Belloc was certainly no more at sea than his great contemporaries. But perhaps more than they, he had other matters of concern besides politics. He had his Church to defend, and that was a permanent thing. If the great debate about Belloc is ever to be held (and, as I say, I hope Speaight has already started it), it is most important that Catholics should assess their attitude toward Belloc's defense of their position. It was an aggressive defense, an attack, in fact. Belloc was forever reiterating the importance of drawing blood in controversy, of breaking heads and generally laying about oneself. It has often been pointed out how much confidence Belloc's violence gave to the timid English Catholics. At a time when their faith needed vigorous reinforcing, Belloc was there to reinforce

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it in spades. If there is any arrogance among English Catholics today, Belloc is partly responsible for that too, though it may have been a price worth paying for the vital increase in confidence.

But does the Church really profit in the long run from broken heads and hurt feelings? Do we really need that kind of defense? Mr. Speaight gives a lucid quotation from Belloc, defining the nature of his tactics. Catholics are advised to read it carefully, and decide for themselves whether they choose to be so defended—read it, but with one warning. Belloc had the English habit of seasoning his most serious outbursts with jokes. To my mind, his jokes are among the finest and most enduring of his creations. But they sometimes make it difficult to disentangle his real meaning. (English people have a particularly misleading tendency to joke about their personal vices: stinginess, vanity—à la Shaw, the Irishman—cowardice, and so on. Similarly, by the way, Belloc mocks his own anti-Semitism.) In the passage I refer to here, Belloc talks about winning people to the church by snobbery, making them think that it is the "right" thing to do. You must simply decide for yourself how serious he is when he talks like this.

Belloc used to say "there is great psychological value in a strong affirmation." His affirmations certainly helped his fellow-Catholics, at least temporarily. But there is a strong suggestion in Speaight's book that they helped Belloc even more. Apparently, his own faith was not particularly strong. With wonderful honesty, he saw that this was so; he never really tried to hide his strong native scepticism from himself. But I have more than a feeling that all his noisy trumpeting about Europe and the Faith was done with the object of quieting his own persistent fears. His endless, clamorous streams of "strong affirmations" argue a powerful need for psychological reassurance. (Concerning all this, Speaight is profoundly understanding.) And how delightfully the chatter of noisy affirmation dies down when his faith truly asserts itself, and he writes calmly and surely of "a female figure with a child." At these moments of tranquility Belloc attains a peak of beauty and purity which must surely disarm all criticism.

By his handling of Belloc's poignant spirituality, Speaight has probably done more for his subject than all his brass-band, tankard-bashing admirers can ever do. Much as I enjoy all the beer and wine and roistering, I feel that Belloc, more than most great men, grows in stature as we discover his solitary weaknesses and doubts. Only then can we appreciate the unwavering fidelity to his wife, to his Church, to his friends. His loyalty and his unique gift for friendship make him a giant among men, after all, just as we were beginning to have doubts. His superb style is, as we had hoped, the signature of a fundamentally virtuous man.

I can only hope that Speaight, or someone else with similar fairness and perception, will go back to Belloc's youth and find out how this monster of vitality emerged fully armed and fully developed, with all his characteristic gifts and passions, at so early an age. From the beginning, everything he ever said or did was pure "Belloc." His identity seems to have been fixed from the cradle. I hope that someday Speaight will come back and tell us how it all happened.

WILFRID SHEED

BOOK REVIEWS

Doubtful Atheist

Dieu prétexte. By Jacques Perry. Paris: Julliard.

AT THE age of thirty-five, Father Dubruel loses his faith but decides to continue to practise the priesthood in the interest of the 2000 inhabitants of Lostanges, in the department of Dordogne. He shares the secret of his lost faith only with a close friend, Father Séverac, who through friendship is unwilling to report the faith-less priest to church authorities. The novel is the first person account of ten years of a priesthood without faith; the role leads eventually to suspension, interdict, and open apostasy. Dubruel sees in the Catholic priesthood an instrument for the accomplishment of much natural good. Indeed, he becomes more zealous and apparently more effective an agent for good after his loss of faith. He even acquires a reputation for sanctity.

The reader wonders just how much of an atheist this abbé really is. He keeps professing to himself that he has no faith, but the inevitable impression is that he doth profess too much. Early in the account the word *Dieu* is usually conditionally qualified by *s'il existe*. The conditional clause later disappears. On one dramatic occasion the sight of a gold cross on a chain around a girl's neck forces the abbé to resist a violent temptation. Would a convinced atheist be so influenced by a mere sacramental?

Because the priest-narrator consciously avoids reflection and meditation in order to keep himself distracted by action, this novel is more a report or observation of what has taken place than a penetrating study of a spiritual drama. We are given little, if any, evidence of an interior conflict, certainly no combat à la Bernanos, as might be expected in a priest-hero novel.

The long retrospective confession would perhaps be less tedious with a more skillful handling of the time element. Had the narrator let the past catch up with the present, say at the time of the interdict, he would have achieved a heightening of dramatic intensity which the concluding pages certainly lack. But then the weariness of the narrative may be but a reflection of the priest-protagonist's weariness after ten exhausting years.

Perry's knowledge of theology is vast and accurate.

University of South Carolina

EUGENE F. MURPHY

Out of Focus

L'Ombre. By Julien Green. Paris: Plon.

THE starting-point of Julien Green's third play is an Othello-Iago-Desdemona situation, but with a difference. Instead of killing Desdemona (Evangelina) himself, Othello (Philip Anderson), who is neither black nor in any sense heroic, acquiesces in her murder by Iago (James Ferris), who pushes her over a cliff. The local people are not convinced that hers was an "accidental" death: they continue to suspect her husband, who has quarreled with his ex-associate, remarried and lived ever since in deepest seclusion. All of this has taken place ten years before the opening of the play.

In the first act of *L'Ombre* Philip, father of a marriageable daughter, and Ferris, now a dying man, are brought together at a dinner given by Mrs. Brimstone, wife of a newly-rich textile manufacturer, for the ostensible purpose of

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reconciling them with one another and with local society. Ferris asks his ex-complice to receive his son, Joel Ferris. Upon Philip's refusal Ferris reveals that Evangeline-Desdemona had been innocent. When Philip-Othello will not hear of forgiving him, Ferris-Iago promises that, willy-nilly, son Joel will call upon him bearing a message. The guests at the party, who find Ferris charming, "cut" the Andersons brutally: the "murderer" and his family, social lepers, will be unable to find a husband for Lucile. Mrs. Brimstone, who, like Ferris, has always resented the condescending attitude of the aristocratic Philip Anderson, is delighted and avenged.

At the beginning of the second act (about two months later) Philip learns from his brother, John Anderson, that Ferris has died two weeks previously. David Grey, a young man who is soon discovered to be Joel Ferris, arrives with the "message": a blank sheet of paper. Struck by his resemblance to his father, Philip invites him to prolong his visit. The ex-Othello is likewise increasingly troubled by Lucile's resemblance to her mother. Now that he knows Evangeline-Desdemona to have been innocent, he has fallen in love with her again. The second Mrs. Anderson, Edith (with whom her brother-in-law John is in love, but without hope and at a correct distance), attempts desperately and unsuccessfully to win back her husband from the "shade" of her predecessor.

As Act III opens (about a month later) Grey-Ferris and Lucile-Evangeline (like her mother, an adult little girl) have fallen in love. Philip's increasing obsession with the "shade" involves him in something of a Barrett-of-Wimpole-Street relation with his daughter. Evangeline's brother, Bruce Douglas, who, having learned the truth, has forgiven Ferris and befriended his son, urges Philip to do likewise. Again a refusal. But history will not repeat itself. Philip will again lose Evangeline who, in this second incarnation, will prove unfaithful to him by accepting young Ferris. He will be doubly haunted; what had not been true will become true; and, this time, it is not the innocent (Evangeline) but the guilty (Philip) who will die, and not by the will of another but by his own. Now desperate, he takes solitary walks along the fatal cliff. Edith Anderson, equally desperate, rightly fears the worst. As the curtain goes down John Anderson arrives with the catastrophic news: his sister-in-law faints away in his arms.

The foregoing summary of what takes place in *L'Ombre* indicates how unnecessarily and (for purposes of the theatre) confusingly cluttered and diffuse it is. Green's first play, *Sud*, gained immensely in force and effectiveness from the circumstance that it represented a *crisis*, intensely concentrated and resolved dramatically. All the details were, one felt, relevant to that crisis: omit any of them and you subtract from the play something that ought to be there. In *L'Ombre*, on the other hand (as in its predecessor *L'Ennemi*, with its echoes of Bernanos), the elements of the intrigue appear to collide and tumble over one another. They are not clearly integrated. The characters are not clearly in focus. Everything seems a bit blurred. In the novel form, with its opportunities for development and cumulative effect, the personages and action of *L'Ombre* (and of *L'Ennemi* as well) might have been rendered credible. On the stage, where a greater degree of concentration becomes dramatically necessary, they appear melodramatic, confused, unreal.

As in the two earlier plays, Green's indications of time and place are fairly precise. But one does not feel that, in *L'Ombre*, any compelling reason exists

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for situating the action at that specific time (1888-1889) and in that particular place (in and near "a large provincial city, Liverpool perhaps"). The speech, behavior, and psychology of the characters do not strike one as possessing the peculiarly insular stodginess natural to such a setting: in a French milieu one might find them more plausible. Use of such "expressive" comic names as "Mrs. Brimstone," "Judge Fribble," "Rev. Maudlin," and "Miss Fiend" does not seem a very rewarding comic device. The dialogue, at times dramatically effective (as in the first act, and especially in the scene between Ferris and Philip Anderson), sinks at other times to the falsely poetic and unconvincingly naive (as in the juvenile love scenes) or to the hackneyed and melodramatic (as in the Barrett-of-Wimpole scenes between Philip and his daughter). In the case of an artist so painstaking, of a touch and tone normally so sure, such blemishes are not easy to explain.

But there are other and more serious shortcomings. The first act, it is true (theatrically perhaps the most effective), does have two necessary consequences (necessary for the action of the play). Ferris' revelation is responsible for Philip's resuscitated love for Evangeline. And Philip's refusal to forgive Ferris sets in motion the latter's posthumous vengeance. But what relevance to the action as a whole is contained in the elaborate comedy of manners in this same act: the snubbing of the Andersons at the Brimstone soirée which renders impossible their readmission to local society? For the Andersons, apparently, feel slight need of, and care very little for, the life of society. All their preoccupations are with their own personal problems. Philip Anderson detests and will not forgive Ferris; once he is assured of his dead wife's fidelity, he falls in love with her again, or rather with her "shade" as subsisting in her portrait and as incarnate in his daughter; he gives virtually no thought to the rest of the world. Edith Anderson fights a losing battle for her husband's love with the "shade" of her predecessor (her brother-in-law's love for her seems unnecessarily to complicate the plot); the outside world does not perceptibly matter to her. Lucile is not interested in getting married; she is a perpetual *petite fille*; with her parents' approval she dismisses her socially acceptable fiancé. One cannot see that to any of these people the opinions, whether negative or positive, of Brimstones and sub-Brimstones could have much importance.

Nor is it apparent why Ferris should attach the importance which he ostentatiously and almost abjectly does to "gaining a foothold" in the Anderson home, first for himself, then for his son. He is not, he tells Philip, the latter's equal. He insists that he is not, in the English sense of the term, a "gentleman"; but he is presented as quite intelligent and resourceful enough to forego that advantage. In the matter of manners and *savoir-vivre*, in his dealings with other people, he shows himself clearly superior to the well-born Philip. The attitude of this Iago remains ambiguous, his motivation obscure. In a novel Green would have rendered him plausible; in a play he is not altogether convincing. We are not given the necessary clues to a proper understanding of him.

Even less coherent is the character of Philip as tragic hero. The parts do not fit together, or more exactly, they do not add up to much. There is no irony apparent in Green's treatment of him; we seem to be expected, on the contrary, to take him with utter seriousness. He is presented as weak and unstable; intellectually and spiritually rather empty; easily suspicious and readily deceived; arrogant and obstinate; lacking in imagination, sympathy, generosity; shut up

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in a rather dull ego. When he tells Ferris: "I never lie!" the latter is probably right in answering: "Really, Philip? Your whole life has been a lie since the evening of Oct. 10, 1878 [and not before that date?]. You cannot breathe air except with the lungs of a liar. Your eyes, your mouth, your hands, your whole body and your soul with it, all of that lies from morning to night, and lies, and lies, like me. Let them try to tell us that a gentleman doesn't lie! A gentleman lies quite as readily as someone who isn't quite a gentleman, like me, doesn't he?" But we are never given the necessary key to Philip's character; we are told a great deal about him without ever learning quite enough; at the end of the play he has not yet achieved status as a real person.

And finally, given Green's concern with religion, are we justified in venturing an interpretation of the play in religious terms? In the figure of the Rev. Maudlin we are treated to a fairly crude satire of "respectable" and unimaginative Protestantism. But, much more importantly, Philip is apparently offered two chances to save himself and to avoid despair and damnation, but only by renunciation of his hatred and exercise of the Christian virtue of charity. By his refusal in Act I (repeated in Act III) to forgive Ferris and to befriend his son, Philip renders his own punishment and doom certain. Yet, one asks, is Philip in a position to exercise forgiveness? Must he not first seek forgiveness himself? Does Ferris' confession absolve Philip of the responsibility of having consented to the murder of his wife? Has he in any sense atoned for his own guilt? Has he ever really repented of his past complicity? Does he, one would like to know, ever see himself as in any way to blame for what happened? The point seems important but remains unresolved.

I do not believe that, were it the product of a lesser writer, *L'Ombre* would deserve much attention. In the case, however, of a talent so considerable as Julien Green's, the less successful works need to be taken into account. It is consoling to reflect that, while adding very little, they cannot subtract from his past achievement.

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JOHN H. MEYER

Priest-Poet-Critic

René Fernandat, Poet and Critic: A Dissertation. By Sister Mary Hugolina Konkell. Catholic University of America Press. \$2.75.

SCHOLARS interested in the Catholic revival in France will welcome this presentation and appraisal of one who, although not a figure of the first importance, is nevertheless a critic and poet well worth investigation.

René Fernandat is the pen-name of Canon Louis Genet, a priest of the Dauphiné, who is relatively little known on the North American continent but whose work has attracted the attention of some important critics in France, including Yves Gérard le Dantec and André Fontainas, one-time pupil of Mallarmé and a fine poet in his own right.

As a critic René Fernandat is chiefly known for his work on Paul Valéry: *Méditation sur M. Valéry et le "Cimetière Marin"*; *Paul Valéry, Essai*; and *Autour de Paul Gélery, Lignes d'Horizon*. Indeed, Sister M. Hugolina points out that "he was one of the first to write a good criticism of Valéry and to create interest in his works."

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About one half of the present book is devoted to a discussion of Fernandat's criticism of Valéry and, while the author finds it necessary to quote large excerpts from the Canon's work owing to the scarcity of texts in the United States, and while we could perhaps wish that her own criticism had been a little more penetrating, yet we are able to disengage something of the critical procedure of René Fernandat. We find him using what the writer calls the "philological method," that is, letting passages of Valéry's prose act as commentary on his poetry; we see him trying to show the relationship between the poet's rhythms and his thought and feeling; we are introduced to the symbols he uses and are shown their adequacy or inadequacy. Again, the critic analyzes certain themes met with in the poetry of Valéry—and in that of the symbolists in general. Among these he examines the relationships existing between architecture, which Valéry calls "frozen music," the dance, and music itself; he seeks out the origins and characteristics of Narcissism and finds that love of the self, elevated to a cult, is but the extension of the love of nature (or too strong a feeling for the beauty of the world) and that it is fundamentally pantheistic.

We also note in Fernandat's work the use of the comparative method of criticism when he links Valéry with Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Edgar Allan Poe, assigning a chapter to each comparison. One aspect of Fernandat's criticism to which the author takes exception—and in so far as poetry is not made out of ideas, she is correct—is that of tracing the philosophical filiation of the poet's ideas. For example the critic sees in one poem of Valéry influences stemming from Parmenides, Aristotle, Plotinus, and the Gnostics of the second century. This last approach is not without value when one is dealing with poets such as Mallarmé or Valéry who regard their poetry as a means of knowledge rather than of expression or communication. It helps us to understand the terms which they use and to situate their poetic technique. Related to this is, without doubt, Valéry's great interest in the etymological derivation and meaning of words: a trait shared, incidentally, by both Mallarmé and T. S. Eliot.

Fernandat does more than link Valéry with the philosophers of the past; he sees him as a forerunner of Heidegger, Sartre, and the Existentialist movement; and also compares him with the Dadaists and the Surrealists, where he notes both affinities and differences. "He (the Surrealist) imitates either Rimbaud in crediting words with secret magic properties which can sometimes illumine with a sudden flash a mystic universe inaccessible to our sense, or Mallarmé in his attempt to find a method which would enable the poet to make use of these inexplicable, miraculous properties." Valéry, says Fernandat, does not have this implicit trust in the power of words which we find in the poets just mentioned, and he sees an affinity with the surrealists rather in his "pre-dilection for the interior reality."

In her treatment of Fernandat as a poet, Sister M. Hugolina groups his poems according to motifs—patriotism, nature, mythology, and religion—since it is these which have chiefly given Fernandat's poetry its orientation.

His patriotic poetry, written during the two world wars, reveals "a Christian understanding of the spiritual significance of the horrors of war," and a true love for his native land. Inspired, even as so many of his fellow-countrymen, by the great saint of France, Fernandat has followed in the steps of Péguy, Bernanos, and Claudel in writing, at the end of World War II, *Jeanne d'Arc: Dialogue d'une Sainte avec le Ciel et la Flamme*.

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Whatever the theme of Fernandat's poetry however, he views all things *sub specie aeternitatis*. But his work makes us think of Eliot's plea for a poetry which would be "unconsciously rather than deliberately and defiantly Christian." And if André Fontainas, in words which remind us of Eliot's discussion of Unified Sensibility, complains of a lack of emotion and an insufficient fusion of thought and feeling in Fernandat's early poetry, it is not, as the author seems to imply, that André Fontainas denies that nature poetry can be spiritually informed; he merely insists that thought should not predominate in poetry at the expense of the sensuous element and he finds too little of the latter in the work that he is criticising. Thus, when Fernandat blends the classical myth (which is very dear to Fontainas) with the meaning of Christianity, Fontainas praises him warmheartedly.

Each of Fernandat's collections of poems is analysed by the author and the criticism of them in the French literary journals is discussed. A special chapter is devoted to stylistic analysis but Sister Hugolina is the first to say that hers is but an initial study which therefore bases its appraisals "on the 'explication' of selections and on the criticism made earlier by others." She therefore, partly from delicacy (since René Fernandat himself has furnished her with biographical and bibliographical data and provided newspaper clippings unavailable elsewhere), declines to summarize the worth of René Fernandat either as poet or critic. Nevertheless she compares him favorably with Louis le Cardonnell as a poet and suggests that his "metaphysical considerations on a literary level" and his method of textual analysis place him on a level with Charles du Bos as a critic.

Since this work is a doctoral dissertation, it suffers from certain defects common to theses. The first part is somewhat like an annotated anthology; while this arrangement is perhaps necessary, it is nevertheless unsatisfactory since at times it misleads the reader by the stress which the critic places upon certain arguments merely referred to by the author, and also subjects the reader to the irritation of being confronted with interesting but incomplete quotations. Again, one cannot help wishing that a more personal criticism had been attempted in dealing with Fernandat's poetry, a criticism which would adopt a more comprehensive and penetrating set of critical criteria.

Despite these drawbacks, the book is valuable, both because of its presentation of the total work of this priest-poet-critic and because of its bibliography based largely on information derived from unpublished sources, chief among which is René Fernandat's correspondence with Sister M. Hugolina.

MARIANA RYAN

America Observed

Letters and Notes, Vol. I. By Elinor Castle Nef. Edited by John U. Nef. Ward Ritchie Press. \$4.00.

THIS book which might be called *Citizen of the World Papers* was written by an unusually sensitive and gifted woman who had great advantages of travel and experience. Remembrance of her travel provides her point of reference for a criticism of contemporary America unified throughout by seeing American standards comparatively, in relation to those of France. However, it is never with the remoteness of an expatriate that the observations are made, for the author

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always returned home to look with an immediacy at the details of life about her.

Above all, Elinor Castle Nef wished to make America more aware of its potentiality for tradition and, even more important, for a consequent culture. Implicit in this position is a broad definition of tradition, a definition largely in terms of travel, and mainly travel in France. She implies this definition frequently and states it thus: "tradition resides not in words and wisdom, not in custom only, but in something tangible and visible, in churches, monuments, buildings, in the neighbor's farm, the streets and bridges, and the planting—see the pantomime in that French field, the men and women working there in old ways before our very eyes."

It is this "something tangible and visible" which is most characteristic of Elinor Castle Nef's method of presentation. The concrete and the accurately concrete are always emphasized in her comparisons. All abstractions she attempts to express in tangibles in almost the manner of a metaphysical poet. This she does especially with regard to tradition which is a concept basic to most of the book.

Always identifying herself with that about which she is writing, she attempts to understand why it is that American efforts at tradition have been abstract, and on the whole fruitless. She writes, "We have only a short history, we Middle-Western Americans, and what we do have we don't know familiarly. This also partly accounts for our feeling of being suspended in time and space. I said I thought life was easier to live when you had both the continuity of personal life and the tradition of your country's history." She goes on to observe, "We in America have adjusted ourselves to living in this precarious hour between two unknowns, the past and future." She recommends learning about our past as a source of stability.

The scope of the book is a broad one including comment on architecture, food, manners, customs, movies, and education. Perhaps the most valuable sections of the work, however, are those dealing with literature. Here she makes a strong claim for the values in American literature and repeatedly suggests that reading will be a means for sharpening the awareness which is so much needed in America. In reporting a conversation held in an English drawing room she quotes herself on advising that "the good American writers could teach an Englishman about England, a Frenchman about France." This was mistaken for a witticism. She goes on to complete the point by telling that she learned "what America is like from reading *The Years* by Virginia Woolf. As I read I was constantly comparing English life with American life. I compared the little girls having tea in the opening chapter of the book to an American young girl, their staid sense of responsibility, her carefree *joie de vivre*."

The author does not attempt to impose her taste on the reader but only to awaken the reader to a recognition of the need for taste. This is done not by the urbanity and sophistication of the writer but by her seriousness and sincerity. The fact that she turns throughout the book to France as the norm of western civilization does not mean that she implies that all Americans must do the same.

This book deserves reading and study not only for ideas and content but very much for style as well. The style is quiet and cultivated, with its own peculiar cadence. In a letter written in 1951, referring to Cézanne's simplifications, she makes a statement which can well be applied to her own style, "I believe a strong purpose encourages one to simplify in many of the activities of

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life." It is clearly her own strong purpose in writing that causes the simplicity and ease of style which show throughout that she admired the expressive but never the extravagant.

The book is an example of excellent editing as done by her husband, and of very fine illustration. In all, about three dozen pictures are used to bring an even more personal tone to the book. Since this is designated as Volume I, the reader may hope for more of those valuable writings done before her death on February 8, 1953.

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LOIS E. A. BYRNS

David from Stone

The Imperial Intellect. By A. Dwight Culler. Yale University Press. \$5.00.

DWIGHT CULLER'S study of Newman's educational ideal could quite possibly be the most significant contribution to Newman scholarship since Anne Mozley and Wilfrid Ward. It represents something of the two year labor spent in microfilming journals, notebooks, manuscripts of published and unpublished works, proof sheets and memoranda, account books, and over four hundred volumes of letters. Availability alone makes Culler's library work incalculably valuable to Americans. His book, the fruit of that work, uses a multitude of fresh sources and thus gives a new insight to certain phases of Newman's life. Above all, in letting the manuscripts, notes, letters, and lectures speak for themselves, it offers a definitive statement on the dynamic tensions existing between Newman's religious progress and the growth of his educational ideal.

Culler, or better, the material at hand, reveals that the pattern of Newman's educational and religious interests was "not the steady, ineluctable march toward Rome, but an oscillation between an intellectual liberalism and a religious submissiveness which revealed itself most dramatically in the five crushing illnesses of Newman's adolescence and early manhood. From most biographies one would hardly know that these illnesses had occurred. Even where they are mentioned they are not related to each other nor is their significance emphasized. And yet, in my opinion, these illnesses provide an essential key to the understanding of Newman's intellectual and religious development."

Newman's stature seems to emerge gradually but totally out of the pages of *The Imperial Intellect*. It would not be too far fetched to compare its emergence to that of a David coming out of Michelangelo's stone. The intellectual and religious figure that begins its formation at Trinity assumes more definite lines at Oriel and in Sicily, is hammered out in the Tractarian experience, and is finally finished and polished in Dublin. Metaphors apart, the substance of Newman is all here, the whole person in the most existential sense of the term. The rest, his ideas on the University, on knowledge and its uses, on the sciences, on philosophy and its relationship to theology, are no more than developments, a more elaborate finish put upon the body of his thought by the concrete circumstances of life that elicited their being brought to light.

The Imperial Intellect contains so much Newman material that one can barely resist the temptation to write another essay simply cataloguing the items and commenting on the relationships from which they spring and to which they

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refer. They range through ancient and contemporary men of ideas: Aristotle and Cicero, Keble, Hawkins, Froude, Pusey, and Copleston. They touch upon ancient problems that were contemporary to Newman and have become very contemporary to the modern intelligence: the Bible and the secular sciences, religion in the school, academic freedom and the maintenance of norms and quality standards, the liberal arts, the meaning and function of a tutor. Not all that Newman said on these and myriad other topics is contained in the book. But the sources are here in one volume with an excellent bibliographical appendix, copious notes, and a thorough index.

It is to the credit of the author that he writes of scholarly things interestingly and with a controlled enthusiasm. The dust has all been wiped away from the musty tomes of research. What could have been dead and dry has been brought to life. *The Imperial Intellect* is a book essential to every library, to all lovers of Newman, to any educator who would also be a humanist.

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VICTOR R. YANITELLI, S.J.

Péguy and an Interpreter

La Thèse. By Charles Péguy. Paris: Gallimard.

Le tourment de Péguy. By Pierre Suire. Paris: Robert Laffont.

AS MORE and more of Péguy's unpublished works are issued, astonishment grows not only at his prodigious productivity, but also at the extent to which he foresaw the intellectual developments of this century, anatomised the weaknesses in the secular intellectual mind, forecast the breakdown of positivism, and pointed the way to that French Catholic revival which shows itself equally Péguyist in the work of the Abbé Pierre and of the Little Brothers of Jesus, in the liturgical revival, in the Oriental studies of Père Daniélou, and in Jean Guitton's approach to the agnostic. Socialist, Catholic, poet, philosopher, social analyst, man of action, man of prayer, peasant, intellectual, spirit committed to the future of France, of Catholicism, and of mankind, Péguy, in the largeness of his personality and of his experience, touched the spirals of our *Angst*-ridden century at so many points that almost everything he wrote combines the modernity of today's newspaper with a profundity that defies the ephemeral.

La Thèse, a huge "fragment"—310 pages of it—written in 1910 and now published for the first time by the NRF, takes its place at once among the most important of Péguy's later prose-works. Nowhere, not even in *L'Argent* or in *Clio*, does he so directly confront the modern secular academic mind. In immense sentences, crawling down the page like pythons, Péguy argues, states, reiterates, qualifies, defines, circles tirelessly round his major themes—the invasion of all domains of ideas by the methods of "scientific history," the attempts of the intellectuals to reduce reality to a matter of historical record, the evasion by philosophers of personal commitment by their allegedly "objective" surveys of the development of philosophy.

In his analysis of the French educational system, and the attitudes implied in it, he does not attack accurate scholarship, but he raises still pertinent questions about the confusion of means with ends, and about the nature of reality itself. For Péguy, the reduction of reality to scientific exposition ignores not only

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the dynamic qualities of cultures and of the human spirit, but also the movement of that spirit towards God, the ultimate reality.

ce n'est plus l'atelier qui est une extension plus ou moins illégitime et naturellement encore moins la nature un dépassement du laboratoire.

c'est le laboratoire au contraire qui est une réduction plus ou moins illégitime

un réduit de l'atelier et naturellement à plus forte raison de la nature.

Bergsonian philosophy and classical wisdom are his superbly marshalled allies in this onslaught on the pretensions of the historical method. And hardly less important is his skillful raising of doubts about the "dispassionateness" of modern intellectuals, which so often masks a positivist bias.

At the heart of *La Thèse* is a lengthy Socratic debate with Halévy and Benda, in the course of which Péguy ranges over such characteristic topics as hope, sorrow, the nature of language, culture, and patriotism. Seemingly written at white-heat, and unrevised, *La Thèse*, rather more than some of his other prose works, suffers from repetition, tortuous sentences, violent shifts of interest, and some obscurity, yet it is sustained throughout by the firm skeleton of Péguy's relentless logic. Two fragments of *Clio* and other brief pieces, of which the most notable is a "note conjointe" on Cartesian philosophy ("Une grande philosophie n'est pas celle qui a le plus de vérité, c'est celle qui a le plus de retenue") complete this absorbing addition to our knowledge of the writer.

Meantime, the task of interpreting Péguy proceeds apace. After almost thirty books on his character and thought, it would seem that even on such a complex subject, little remains to be said. Yet Pierre Suire, in *Le tourment de Péguy*, provides a much needed and deeply sympathetic study of one aspect of Péguy which, while it has been often mentioned in passing, has never before been so vigilantly scrutinised—the evolution of his religious ideas. Suire's deeply Catholic mind and his love for Péguy lend an unusual serenity and clarity to his treatment of a subject so often the arena for partisan squabbles.

His book was begun in Dachau concentration camp, where, in the evenings, a group of Péguyists gathered to draw consolation and courage from Péguy's poems. This background gives particular point to Suire's exegesis. He examines Péguy's Catholic childhood, showing the traditional drives and loyalties which were to persist in his mind, but also the vulnerability of a faith gained in an environment where practice was often subordinated to the demands of toil. The erosion of that faith by his years at college, by his difficulty in accepting the doctrine of Hell, and by the apparent hypocrisy of bourgeois Catholics is carefully delineated. "Puisque l'enfer est impossible, Dieu n'existe pas," was Péguy's youthful conclusion.

These rejections carried him into the period empty of God and nourished by Socialism. "Ne soyons pas religieux même avec monsieur Renan," he said. Step by step, Suire follows Péguy's subsequent disillusionment—with the intellectuals, proud and narrow, with Left Wing demagogues, with the betrayal by the modern mind of the Hellenic, Hebraic, Christian, and French traditions, with the political exploitation of the Dreyfus affair. Péguy's Socialism was always profoundly mystical, and even in the midst of his most fervently non-religious period, God remained at the center of his heart. God came back more and more to his consciousness as he saw everywhere in the secular world imperfect man proclaiming his own perfection.

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Then came the profound influence of Bergson, whose lectures broke down for Péguy the bastions of scientism, opened up new ways to the Eternal Being and provided a rational framework for his dual instinct for independence and order. Suire traces Péguy's slow movement towards the heart of Christianity, his acceptance of God's justice ("S'il n'y avait pas damnation et si le salut était obligatoire, la liberté ne serait plus qu'un mot et la justice serait nulle.") The converging influences of the saints, especially Joan of Arc, of the Blessed Virgin, and of Chartres, of his study of the New Testament and of the catechism, and of his painful pursuit of prayer are delicately set out.

Suire's conclusion on the problem of Péguy's living without the Sacraments is the same as that of Yvonne Servais, in her *Charles Péguy: The Pursuit of Salvation*—the opposition of his freethinking wife and her family, and his love for her and his children, kept him "a Catholic outside the Church." But Pierre Suire's patient study of the texts leaves no doubt as to the completeness of Péguy's adhesion to Catholic truth and to the doctrine of the Sacraments. Of especial value is the description of the nuances Péguy, like any great Catholic, introduced into his apprehension of Catholicism—his anticipation of Pope Pius XI in pointing to the reasons for the loss of the proletariat to the Church, his broad concept of the nature of the parish, identical with that of the apostolic modern French clergy, his understanding of the role of the Jews, his awareness of the power of the secret life.

And through all this sensitive presentation runs the awareness of Péguy's spiritual agonies, of his passionate sincerity, of his strenuous pursuit of truth. "J'ai tant souffert et tant prié," he told Baillet. "Tu ne peux pas savoir." Suire leaves no doubt as to the graces Péguy won by prayer, by the violent storming of heaven's citadel. Did he confess, and receive Communion before his death in battle? The question remains open; what can no longer be challenged is the fullness of his acceptance of Catholicism and its effect in deepening his vision, maturing his gifts, and in sharpening his significance for today.

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J. C. REID

Cornerstone

L'Expérience vécue de Simone Weil. By Jacques Cabaud. Paris: Plon.

IF WE remember that the Catholic world took many years to accept Charles Péguy; that, even long after his death, most French bishops considered him a menace; that, finally, any philosophy like Péguy's which leaps from atheistic socialism to an adoration of Christ and the sacraments is bound to confuse the average spectator; then we are in a better position to understand the strange case of Simone Weil which—despite six books and a deluge of articles—had to wait for a long, slightly tedious but thorough work by Jacques Cabaud, to enjoy anything even approaching a definitive treatment.

Indeed, we cannot be too grateful to Jacques Cabaud's *L'Expérience vécue de Simone Weil*. By using generous portions of unpublished material as well as lengthy quotations from her early, still unknown, articles, he has shown that the thought of Simone Weil was of a *continuité frappante*. Each chapter contains pleasant surprises going far toward understanding facets of Simone Weil and in clearing up various misconceptions around, and slanders about, her work.

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The revelation to this reviewer was the distinguished richness of her early background, which was a beautifully strong springboard to send her toward an ever deepening acceptance of Rome. Before reading Cabaud we knew little of her early life except that she was a student of the fabulous Alain and active in various movements colored by anarchy, socialism, or communism. But what rich overtones these simple facts take under Cabaud's elaboration! First, we find that Simone Weil's fame did not come out of some secret void. Though only thirty-four at her death, she had been famous for over a decade. Her criticism of communist principles in several brilliant articles was deep enough to draw the virulent attention of Trotsky, when she was but twenty-four years old! She had already drawn the respect of Boris Souvarine, the celebrated intellectual whose anti-Stalinism caused the first split in the French party.

Shortly after the prestige gained by Trotsky's attention, she was the center of a national scandal. She was dismissed from her teaching position as a result of her affiliation with various labor movements. She became a hero and was defended ardently by the National Association of Professors who, however, did not endorse her beliefs. Her many brilliant articles, on a breath-taking variety of subjects, gained her many friends, among them one of France's most respected premiers, Mendès-France, and the secretary of state, Maurice Schumann.

Several pertinent quotes and one fact not known widely until Cabaud's sleuthing show that Simone Weil was practically a convert at her death. First, it should be noticed that, considering her atheistic upbringing and her discipleship to Alain, she had gone much farther in the direction of Rome than Péguy had at a similar age. Her obsession was in doing good to one's fellow and in searching out the Absolute. These interests blossomed into her adoration of Christ, the saints, old churches, and the sacraments—all this in a five year period, almost nothing when one considers the tremendous problems explored. Second, Cabaud lays great emphasis on Simone Weil's insistence that the longer she considered obscure passages of Catholic dogma the more they made sense to her, to the point where she completely accepted them. Finally, there is the testimony of a friend during the London agony that, if she ever fell into a coma, she wished to be baptized. The only friends who administered to her last needs were Catholics who, through scruples, did not want to aggravate her health by discussing serious subjects.

So on the basis of what we know of conversions of a similar nature, we must consider this strange Simone Weil as a sparkplug of the Catholic renaissance—already she has brought far more prestige to Catholic thought in Europe and has had a far deeper and more general influence than the much longer efforts of Maritain and Gilson combined. This reviewer feels that if Baudelaire and Rimbaud, violent anti-clericals forced into a death-bed use of the sacraments, can be considered Catholics, then it is impossible to avoid paying the honor to Simone Weil who, unlike the two *poètes maudits*, had the most acute reverence for the sacraments. Cabaud's book, striving for an admirable objectivity, does not make this point. But the spiritual progression portrayed is so definite that we must come to this conclusion: she was the type of Catholic intellectual described by Gustave Weigel, S.J., in his now famous article in a recent issue of the *Review of Politics*.

Cabaud does not "essentially" add to our knowledge of Simone Weil's theology, already well discussed in Tomlin's *Simone Weil*, published by Yale Uni-

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versity Press; but by so imaginatively weaving the theological upheavals with her life he has given us the first full picture of this bewildering personality. It remains to be said that there is a splendid bibliography listing the works of Simone Weil, articles published during her life, letters, poems, unpublished source materials, books about Simone Weil, and finally over fifty articles on her—two by T. S. Eliot, three by François Mauriac, others by Alain, Etienne, Souvarine, Madaule, Marcel. This bibliography, as well as the book itself, must be the cornerstone for all future thinking about Simone Weil.

HERBERT C. LUST

Bronson's Best

The Bronson Reader. Edited with Introduction by Alvan S. Ryan. Kenedy. \$4.50.

OF ALL the significant literary men who flourished in New England during the nineteenth century, Orestes A. Brownson is perhaps least known. For the grim and thorough student of the period there are, of course, his *Works* in twenty volumes, edited by Henry F. Brownson, who also wrote *Orestes A. Brownson's Early Life* (1898). More recently he has been well presented by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. in *Orestes A. Brownson, A Pilgrim's Progress* (1939), and Theodore Maynard in *Orestes Brownson, Yankee, Radical, Catholic* (1943). Nevertheless, in most anthologies of American literature he is passed over with a word or two of comment; in almost none is he adequately represented. This despite the fact that in one or another of his almost innumerable essays he commented brilliantly on virtually every idea which engaged the attention of the intellectuals of his day: transcendentalism, industrialism, westward expansion, social and monetary reforms, suffrage, slavery, native literature, politics, philosophy, theology. Ryan's *Brownson Reader* comes at a good time and may help to recall his subject to his rightful position, not, certainly, as the foremost mind of the period, but as a serious, astute commentator who (in Ryan's quotation of the existentialist phrase) was "thoroughly engaged in his time and place, yet always seeking absolutes."

How does it happen that this able writer, an associate of Emerson, Alcott, and Ripley and an acknowledged leader of the transcendentalist movement, is so generally overlooked? For answer, some will note the direction of his religious peregrinations: Congregationalism, Presbyterianism, Universalism, Unitarianism, Independence, Catholicism. Obviously, they will conclude, prejudice immediately began to operate and Brownson was submerged in a conspiracy of silence. Without question, anti-Catholic bias and prejudice has been a factor, but only one, and probably not the most important. Brownson's background and training, his personality, his habits of mind, his method in attacking a problem, and conditions of the time all concerted to destroy him.

As Ryan has shown in his brief but illuminating introduction, as long as Brownson moved about among the various Protestant sects he was read and listened to with both attention and respect, despite his humorless insistence on "lecturing." There was good reason for this—his searching and groping largely duplicated the experience of his associates; but, when he became a Catholic in 1844 at the age of forty-one, he made an intellectual and emotional leap for

which his friends were unprepared. It was his intention to write a series of essays explaining the reasons through which he arrived at Catholicism. Instead, acting as he was advised by his instructor, Bishop Fitzpatrick, he undertook almost immediately to become a Catholic apologist using only the traditional arguments for belief. It now appears that Brownson would have retained considerably more reputation and influence if he had followed his original plan; however, the Bishop's attitude is readily understandable for, as Maynard has said, in a quotation used by Ryan: "It was an ecumenical council composed of such queerly assorted figures as William Godwin, and Robert Owen, and Benjamin Constant, and Saint-Simon, and Cousin, and Leroux—all presided over by Dr. Channing—that gave Brownson his faith, in so far as this came from natural sources."

There are additional reasons for Brownson's being neglected. A hard-pressed journalist, he published almost every thought he had, and as soon as it occurred to him. His mind had no secrets. There was no waiting time for contemplation or revision, no caution. His writings are a series of intellectual somersaults—apparent monumental inconsistency, although in fact he was thoroughly consistent in his thirst for truth and his hunger for justice and righteousness. In the past what has defeated most of the few who have attempted to read him from start to finish is, paradoxically enough, his strongest point—his logical, closely reasoned approach to any problem. A Brownson article calls for all of the reader's attention, attention the reader is reluctant to give because he knows that the next article will probably be an equally close-knit argument to destroy the first. And, of course, he always wrote too much.

In the *Brownson Reader*, Brownson appears at his best. Ryan has made an admirable selection of his works under a number of headings: "Society and Politics," "Education," "Literature and Literary Men," "Philosophy," "Religion," and "Christianity and Civilization." In each group the essays are arranged chronologically. A general introduction and head notes for individual essays provide a clear commentary, not only on the essays themselves but also on their relationship to other writings of the time. The editor has shown courage and judgment in cutting repetitious passages. A bibliography and an index would have measurably increased the value of this work; however, in its present form it is both useful and valuable.

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JAMES E. CRONIN

Aspects of Claudel

Paul Claudel: Morceaux choisis. Edited by Robert Mallet. Paris: Gallimard. *Claudel.* By Jacques Madaule. Collection Les Grands Dramaturges. Paris: L'Arche éditeur.

THE author of this compact anthology of 400 pages, Robert Mallet, is editor of the collection of Claudel's *Oeuvres complètes* now in the course of publication at the librairie Gallimard. We learn from the foreword that these *Morceaux choisis* have been "approved and revised" by Claudel himself, who gave the titles to the five sections into which they are classified: "Poésie," "Théâtre," "Exotisme et paysages," "Critique," "Théologie et exégèse." The emphasis is

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not on the dramatic works: excerpts from *L'Otage*, *L'Annonce faite à Marie* and *Le Soulier de Satin* do not altogether occupy much more space (fifty-six pages) than "Exotisme et paysages" (mainly drawn from *Connaissance de l'Est* and *L'Oiseau noir dans le Soleil levant*), while a hundred pages are devoted to each of the two sections "Critique" and "Théologie et exégèse"; this distribution gives their proper significance to some aspects of Claudel's genius which are less known to the great public. The choice, on the whole, seems to be excellent. If, however, one considers that the purpose of anthologies is to present only the best of an author's production, I regret that Mallet (or is it Claudel?) should have included the infamous war poem entitled "Aux morts des armées de la République" and a few poems from *Visages radieux* which contain such lines as: "Il n'y a aucune consolation à retirer du baromètre" and "J'ai pour me reconforter la conversation des domestiques." However interesting some samples of a genius' weaknesses may be, I would have preferred to find instead the admirable *Vers d'exil* which Ernst-Robert Curtius defined as a poetic phenomenology of the mystic consciousness.

Mallet's anthology contains in appendix a bibliography listing year by year the original editions of all of Claudel's works, which makes these *Morceaux choisis* a valuable instrument of work as well as an enjoyable book.

Far from being a mere summary of his classic volume on *Le drame de Paul Claudel*, Madaule's *Claudel* constitutes an original study written in the spirit of the collection "Les Grands Dramaturges," whose aim is to contribute to the new and widely spread interest in the development of Popular Theater; hence the collection wants to "retrouver dans chacun de ces créateurs moins l'écrivain que l'homme de théâtre, moins un psychologue qu'un médiateur entre l'Histoire et la Cité." Madaule's book is composed of four chapters: "Naissance d'une dramaturgie," "Sous le signe de *Partage de Midi*," "*Le Soulier de Satin* ou le drame total," "Une dramaturgie sans psychologie." There is no separate biography of the author (except in the form of a chronological list at the beginning); Madaule follows concurrently the development of Claudel's life and of his drama, showing how Claudel's experiences have influenced his works.

Breaking away from the Western tradition of a psychological theater based on inner conflicts, Claudel, in his first five plays, goes back to the spirit of Greek tragedy, particularly that of Aeschylus: "les personnages sont convoqués par l'action, plutôt que l'action n'est provoquée par les personnages"; action, however, should not be confused with plot: the word designates here a kind of religious, liturgical ceremony. "Le dramatique sort ainsi du poétique, et non l'inverse." Ten years after *Le Repos du Septième Jour* which closes this first cycle as a finale, *Partage de Midi* opens the second cycle of Claudel's dramatic production: a perfect balance is now achieved between lyricism and dramatic dialogue, poetry and action; the characters are no longer allegorical beings but creatures of flesh and blood, and the plays, no longer beyond the realm of time, are situated instead in a precise historical context. The personal tragedy which preceded *Partage de Midi* meant for Claudel "la rencontre de l'Autre, non en imagination mais en réalité"; Madaule adds that "l'Histoire, c'est aussi la rencontre de l'Autre." Studying *L'Otage*, *Le Pain dur*, *Le Père humilié*, all based on the conflict between the feudal regime and the new political and social order born of the French Revolution, Madaule very interestingly shows that this trilogy, which Claudel conceived while he was consul at Prague, owes a

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great deal to the spectacle of the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian empire. After a brief analysis of "l'essor du comique claudélien" (*Protée, L'Ours et la Lune*), Madaule then devotes a whole chapter to *Le Soulier de Satin*, "drame total" which resumes and concludes both *Tête d'Or* and *Partage de Midi*.

In his final chapter, Madaule tries to determine the reason why Claudel's drama, despite its success, has not achieved the wide popularity which is one of the basic goals of the theatre. Attributing this partial lack of response to "l'invasion irrépressible du lyrisme" would not be wrong but superficial, for this lyricism, far from being an external adornment, embodies the realization of the transcendent truths which it is the very purpose of Claudelian drama to illuminate. The plays of Claudel, stresses Madaule, are never psychological nor anecdotic, but always tend to manifest the essential, "which is not not the relationship of man to man, but the relationship of man to the universe on one hand, of man to God on the other." Their cosmic amplitude thus confers upon them a character, not simply of tension, but of "déméure," which often leaves the public disconcerted. Should one then conclude that Claudel's dramatic production constitutes a genial but aberrant attempt? Madaule thinks on the contrary that it opens the way for the future and actually prefigures the theater of tomorrow—a theatre which "going beyond the psychological, the picturesque, the anecdotic, would prove itself capable of expressing the essential needs of a unified humanity."

The book contains a chronological list of the performances as well as numerous stage photographs. This introduction, bringing out with liveliness and masterful clarity both the structure and significance of Claudel's theater, should prove particularly useful to students of drama courses.

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LOUIS PAMPLUME

Conquest through Art

Rainer Maria Rilke: Creative Anguish of a Modern Poet. By W. L. Graff. Princeton University Press. \$6.00.

THERE have been many studies of the German lyric poet Rainer Maria Rilke, both within the area of scholarly research and that of interpretative appraisal, and the present excellent work by Willem L. Graff, emeritus professor of German languages at McGill University, takes its place high among them. By a judicious combination of biography and an astute critical analysis implemented by the tools and findings of modern psychology, Graff points up those essentials that account for Rilke the man and the poet.

At the outset the author makes it clear that he aligns himself with neither of the extreme positions to which Rilke gives rise—an almost worshipful regard, and frank dislike—but chooses a middle terrain, for though greatly admiring the poet he nevertheless feels that nothing would be gained by a too idealistic appraisal; hence he hews to the line of "perspective and truth." He likewise avails himself of all new evidence concerning the poet that has been disclosed and confirmed since the former studies, and if he is critical, he says, it is not to find fault, but to open up a better and wider understanding.

That Rilke is a "phenomenon," Graff will not dispute. He is this on two counts: in the sense of "just happening" outside the control of human devices and

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calculation, and as a sort of "freak of nature," brought about "through the simultaneous action of many forces in a remarkable coincidence of circumstance." He further considers the term "paradox" as applicatory to Rilke, as "his personality and his mode of experiencing and expressing himself, belie and contradict much that we are accustomed to deeming reasonable, probable, or even possible." And in interpreting the forces and circumstances which combined to produce the poet, he insists that Rilke's growth must be considered as pervasively concentric and spiral; this accounts for the manner in which the author has arranged the material in the book, namely, "as a progressive thickening of substance which ultimately reveals the fruit to be contained in the seed." Thus the poet's more mature symbols serve as formulae for moods which in their earlier stages were fluid and undefined. In the use of Rilke quotations, therefore—all of which incidentally are in Graff's lucid translation—chronology was of secondary importance, though in the instances where it was of primary moment the author has taken meticulous cognizance of it.

The author has divided his study into nine sections: "Earliest Environment," "Farewell to Prague," "Emancipation and Festive Expectancy," "Russia and the Russians," "The Book of Hours," "Poet and Saint," "Elegy and Orpheus," "Angels," and "Dolls," each with a sequence of chapters which deal with and circle about the relevant subject-matter. The study is preceded by a brief Preface, and Prelude, in the latter of which Graff makes clear the *raison d'être* for his method of procedure, and also what a decisive role from the psychological standpoint certain incidents of Rilke's childhood played in the development of his creative processes. The author cautions lest we attribute to the poet's thought out of its organic context any general validity, lest we come to confusion and misunderstanding. Though for Rilke himself his poetry had an existential significance we must take care that in our critical approach we do not so consider it; since Rilke was a great poet and dealt with the basic problems of life and death, there are challenging and provocative implications for the human situation. However, as Graff is most careful to point out, one must constantly remember that Rilke's attitudes were not come by through rational analysis or philosophic contemplation, but "remain steeped in sensuous experience which is by many underground channels connected with dreams and adolescent ambitions."

Throughout the work Graff traces and treats poetic symbols as end-products of a slow process of absorption of originally concrete and sensuous experiences—lyrical totals, as the poet himself regarded them, which cannot be itemized. One must take, as it were, the finished tapestry and trace the threads and patterns back to their sources, and this is precisely what the author has done by a perceptive interpretation of the Rilkean motifs and personal confessions. The result is a rich selection of text from the poetry, letters, and essays of the poet, which illustrate unmistakably how from the "weight of childhood memories," there emerged a world of magic and utter happiness, later frustrated, which the poet has tried his life long to re-capture on a new level—that of his art, which he regarded as *sui generis*, and the only law that really mattered.

We see Rilke as a writer with a veritable "demon of creativity," so that when he released the pressure he had built up within him it issued not only into one but numerous cycles of poems, as was the case with the *Book of Hours*. With almost incredible swiftness book followed book. Its first, *The Book of Monkish Life*, written three months after his Russian sojourn, and actually

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within twenty-five days—September 24 to October 14, 1899—came forth in part at least, in thick sheaves: thirteen poems on September 22, eight on September 24, and eleven on September 26. The second part, *Book of Pilgrimage*, was written in eleven days—September 15 to 25, 1901; and the third part, *Book of Poverty and Death*—April 13 to 20, 1903. Then, scarcely a month after the first book, the *Stories of God*, embedded in the same experience, was completed in eleven nights. Rilke was "an artist who allowed himself to be built by his verses, instead of building them," as, in a prose comment to the original version of the *Book of Monkish Life*, he had his monk admit. In answer to a question of a student who had asked concerning the origin of the *Book of Hours*, he wrote, "I uttered them (the words) and I organized myself by means of them for the unknown things of the sleep or of the beginning day." On a few occasions when mentioning the poems in the book he called them "prayers."

Among the several subject-matters discussed by Graff are the poet's friendships, and their—in some instances—cataclysmic effects on his mind and writing, especially such as his relationships with Lou Andreas-Salomé, and "Benvenuta," which though they matured and steadied his restless spirit for a time were nevertheless at their core disappointing. The influences among others of the sculptor Rodin, and of Rudolf Kassner, both of whom were close friends, are also carefully considered.

To the present reviewer one of the most fascinating sections of the book was its Part IV, "Russia and the Russians," which the author has introduced by a translation of two brief and pertinent lines from Rilke's *Studentenbuch*: "Near is the land/that they call Life." These five chapters which cover Rilke's two Russian journeys, and his cosmic, pantheistic, approach to God, to which he thinks he finds an echo in the Russian spirit, are particularly incisive.

We see Rilke deeply moved and influenced both by the country and its people—this was the Russia of 1899 and 1900—in both of which he seemed to find that which confirmed the movements of his own soul. As he later wrote in one of his letters: "Russia was reality . . . the country where people are solitary, each with a world inside him, each full of darkness like a mountain, each abysmal in his loneliness, unafraid of humiliation and, therefore, religious. People full of distant space, uncertainty, and hope: people in the making. And above it all there is a never defined, eternally changing, growing God." As a lyrical poet, Graff points out, Rilke was alert to the images and symbols that suited him, while completely disregarding those facets of the Russian soul that would have been incompatible with his own secret yearnings; hence he completely by-passed such Dostoevskian features as "the stinging consciousness of sin," and the "craving for Redemption."

Among some of the remarkable oddities in Rilke's Russian experiences, the author remarks, is the fact that despite having broken away from the "sentimental" externals of the religious piety as practiced by his mother—statues, medals, shrines, and the like—and despite his conviction that the whole of Western Christianity was outmoded as a hollow shell, in his Russian sojourns he unabashedly mixed with the streams of praying pilgrims, and candle in hand walked through the underground monastery of Kiev. Though this attitude was not without its measure of validity, its true explanation can only lie in the fact that he failed to recognize the awful gap between religion and behavior which

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were so immediately apparent, and so irked him, at home and while at the military school.

In his praise of Russian art, it was the the painters who agreed with him in depicting Christ not as a Redeemer of sinful man and Mediator between God and man, but as a superior human being, unrecognized and misunderstood, that appealed to him. "There is no trace of humility but only boundless pride in Rilke's rejection of mediation or redemption of any kind," says Graff. "For him the true and only mediator between man and God is the artist." His "much vaunted humility," too, lay only in his "recognized dependence on, and his consequent submission to, the inner laws of his art." Rilke was drawn to and trusted such as did not arrive at their God through "faith," but who experienced Him by virtue of their nationhood, such as the Jews, Arabs, and in a certain measure the Orthodox Russians, whose faith to him appeared less a matter of creed than an expression of national communal belonging.

Certain features of Russian architecture also served to confirm him in his deepest feelings—St. Basil's cathedral in Moscow, for instance, which as he says, gives one the impression of its being "pushed out of the soil like a complicated, asymmetric yet organic growth." In a word, Rilke's pantheistic God, Graff makes clear, is a God who in the stone, the clay, and the word, calls on the artist or the poet to give Him other glorious forms in endless metamorphoses. This altogether luminous section furnishes a splendid insight into the religious temper of the poet's mind.

Other equally rewarding sections abound. Part V, wherein under the chapter heading "Moulting" the author explicates Rilke's later shift from his instinctive urge of effusive productivity—a circling about the object—to a direct, detached fronting of it, is another; Rilke herein achieved more precision of symbols and tighter concentration, a crisis whose beginnings were already evidenced in the *Notebook of Malte Laurids Brigge*, and especially in the *New Poems*. Also important is the discussion of the influence of "Seasons and Climates," and "Space and Landscape" upon Rilke, who "saw landscape on the faces and bodies of human beings," and who remarked of the Virgin Mary in the *Book of Hours* that she "blooms like a meadow about God's face." Of special excellence also are the author's treatments of the combination in Rilke of the fundamental characteristics of the West—a yearning for endless speed and progression—and those of the East—the craving for immanent movement in a finite world; and Rilke's mixing of Death with Life as a leavening and intensifying ingredient.

Throughout the treatise Graff insists that the core of the Rilkean attitudes was an intense desire to come to terms with the recalcitrant elements of outside reality. And as the poet's friend Rudolf Kassner states, Rilke strove to overcome not only life, but art itself, *through art*: "If the contradictions of life and art could be harmonized through creative magic, it might be possible again to live and die, simply, in pure obedience to cosmic law, like the animal or the plant." Stranger still is the poet's growing conviction that the work of art is in its last analysis *irrelevant to art*. But one must read Graff's splendid chapter on "Conquest Through Art" in Part VI, to follow Rilke's wanderings along the perilous cliffs of this aesthetic eminence.

In his conclusion, "Dreamcrowned Again," the author asks what validity there is in Rilke's construed and strangely solitary world—for himself and for us. And he answers that "it provided him with a shield against the inner and

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outer ambiguities of existence which he felt so keenly . . . but it did so only up to a point . . . even the God of His childhood was never completely forgotten, not to mention the mystery of 'grace' to which he repeatedly referred with awe as to a pure gift." And he closes his study using a picture from one of Rilke's *New Poems* as a simile, as he compares the edifice of the poet's creation with one of those cathedrals of an old French provincial town, which stands in great quiet, with the houses and shops huddled at its feet. Beneath it men, women, and children pass in search of happiness, carrying their burdens with them. Yet they are scarcely aware of its closeness. But at night when the shops are closed, they raise their heads and listen, for in the foundations of that towering structure are hidden throes, and in its rising stones strength and inspiration: "its portals are full of sighs, and everywhere is love like wine and bread. And in its tower, runcated as by renunciation, there is death."

It would be impossible to indicate in the limits of a brief review the richness and comprehensiveness of Graff's study. His is an achievement of that ripe and meticulous scholarship not frequently come by, and that no future student of Rilke can possibly ignore.

The volume is completed by two indexes, one a Key to Abbreviations—references throughout the book are practically and economically placed in the body of the work rather than in cumbersome footnotes; and a Bibliography of Selected English Translations from the Works of Rainer Marie Rilke; Works in English on Rilke; and the ordinary index proper to the book.

SISTER M. THERESE.

Franciscan Heart

La Neige qui brûle: Marie Noël. By Raymond Escholier. Paris: Fayard.

THE publication of this first comprehensive biography of the contemporary French Catholic poet and prose writer, Marie Noël, is very welcome. No one was better fitted to write it than the well-known author Raymond Escholier, a friend of Marie Noël for thirty-six years. To him she confided much unedited material (poems, notes, letters) of immense interest to all who want a deeper understanding both of the woman and her writings.

Marie Noël's life, at least outwardly, has not been what is usually meant by the word "eventful." Except for short periods of time, she has always lived in Auxerre, where she was born on February 16, 1883, and has quietly occupied herself with household tasks, the care of members of her family, music, works of charity, and her writings. She never married. She has never sought publicity for her work, winning almost in spite of herself the admiration and affection of readers of many countries, especially Belgium. In France an outstanding friend was the novelist Edouard Estaunié, who could not praise too highly either her verse or her prose. She has received many literary prizes and belongs to various learned groups. She is very devout.

Escholier presents all these facts and others about Marie Noël and her family. However, the real material for the biographer is to be found in her inner life, of which her work is a faithful record. She herself said: "Mon oeuvre est moins une oeuvre qu'une vie chantée." It is into the rich and beautiful world of her thoughts and emotions that Escholier takes us. In a sense, one has the

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impression that he does not so much reveal Marie Noël as allow her to reveal herself in all her sensitiveness, capacity for suffering, sincerity, simplicity, and warmth of heart.

Escholier sees that Marie Noël's poetry was nourished primarily by the old popular songs of France. "Marie Noël doit tout à la Chanson de France." He even calls her "une survivante du siècle de Jeanne d'Arc" and adds "Son langage, ses cadences, son inspiration appartiennent bien plus au tempe de Villon . . . qu'à la Pléiade ou aux âges classique et romantique." However, he also stresses her clairvoyance with regard to the problems of her own time, as borne out, for example, by her disapproval of the Pact of Munich in 1938.

The four volumes of verse on which Marie Noël's fame mainly rests are: *Les Chansons et Les Heures* (1920), *Les Chants de la Merci* (1930), *Le Rosaire des Joies* (1930), and *Chants et Psaumes d'Automne* (1947). They are now available in one beautifully printed and bound volume, *L'Oeuvre poétique de Marie Noël*, published by Stock in 1956. Escholier studies all these volumes in relation to the dramas of the poet's heart and mind, finding in the fierce spiritual combat of *Jugement* at the close of *Chants et Psaumes d'Automne* her masterpiece. Marie Noël has known the dark night of the soul and, as she puts it, has seen the heavens again. She has won peace and joy. In fact, Escholier shows that joy is the basic quality of this Franciscan heart, to which the song of a bird can bring supreme delight.

At times, Escholier's enthusiasm for his subject finds its outlet in too many adjectives like "marvellous," "superb," "wonderful." However, it is quite conceivably difficult to restrain one's enthusiasm about a writer whom Paul Guth and many others consider "le plus grand Poète français vivant." The inclusion of photographs, of which there are none, would have added much to the interest of the book.

CHRISTINA CRANE

Opening Some Doors

Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Second Edition. Edited by Claude Collier Abbott. Oxford. \$11.50.

Mastery and Mercy. By Philip M. Martin. London: Oxford.

WHEN the collected poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins were first published in 1918, almost thirty years after the poet's death, the edition numbered fewer than 1,000 copies. It was some ten years later that this printing was exhausted. With the second revised edition of 1930, however, interest in Hopkins and his work had increased to the extent that the Oxford University Press (OUP) within a few years published in four volumes practically all the available letters and prose writing of this Jesuit—even to sermon notes. One of the most valuable of these publications, *Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, has been out of print for a number of years. As a result, this second revised and enlarged edition is truly welcome.

The *Further Letters*, containing as they do Hopkins' correspondence with Coventry Patmore, his letters to Baillie extending over a period of fifteen years, and many other miscellaneous ones, provide an excellent background for a fuller understanding of Hopkins' poetry and are cherished by all lovers of the poet's writings. From these letters we receive intimate details concerning Hopkins'

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wide interests and his tendency to theorize; nature, languages, Egyptology, music, painting, and, of course, prosody (especially in the correspondence with Patmore) enter into this collection of letters.

By far the most important and revealing additions to the new edition are Hopkins' letters to his family, made available by the death of the poet's brother Lionel in 1952 at the age of ninety-eight. This group includes seventy letters to his mother, six to his father, and one to Lionel, plus a draft of his father's moving reply to the announcement of his son's conversion to Roman Catholicism. According to *TLS* (December 21, 1956), Leo Handley-Derry, strangely not mentioned in the preface of the new edition, inherited these family letters and turned them over to the OUP. They now repose in the Bodleian at Oxford with other Hopkinsiana.

The plan of the second edition follows in general that of the first, with four general groupings of the letters and several appendixes. The letters appear under the headings: A. Miscellaneous Letters; B. Family Letters; C. Letters to Alexander William Mowbray Baillie; and D. Correspondence with Coventry Patmore. In using this division, the editor had to choose very carefully.

A straight chronological ordering of the letters would possess many advantages, as W. H. Gardner evidenced in his *Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Penguin, 1953). Such a chronological grouping would enable the reader to follow the poet's experiences, problems, and thoughts at any one stage of his life, without the inconvenience of constantly turning back and forth in the book. This order would be especially advantageous in the sequence of letters dealing with Hopkins' period of conversion to the Catholic faith. A topical grouping, similar to that used in John Pick's *A Hopkins Reader* (OUP, 1953), would also have advantages. Since each system, however, must also suffer disadvantages, Abbott undoubtedly chose his division after careful deliberation.

All Hopkins scholars and students will be grateful to Abbott for his careful editing and his painstaking labor in identifying the large number of people, facts, and publications mentioned in the poet's letters. He has provided much biographical background on all of Hopkins' important friends and acquaintances. He even gives (pp. 439-43) most of the long *Illustrated London News* editorial of December 18, 1875 on the wreck of the *Deutschland*, as well as two brief extracts from the *Times's* very full accounts of that wreck. Numerous longer selections from these vivid reports of the *Times* may be found in *Immortal Diamond: Studies in Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Sheed & Ward, 1949) edited by this reviewer.

Abbott must have faced a very difficult task in editing these letters. Only thirteen of the almost 200 letters of Hopkins here printed were written before the poet's conversion and but twenty-six before his decision to enter the Jesuit Order. So, far from sharing Hopkins' Catholic beliefs and his love for the Jesuits, Abbott's personal attitude in these matters is evidently not one of sympathy. (Cf. the statement in his "Introduction" to *Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, p. xlv: "... he [Bridges] had, and rightly, a profound distrust of the Society of Jesus.") Nevertheless, I am confident that the editor endeavored to be objective in his work and has performed a true scholar's labor, if not a labor of love.

In the second book under consideration Canon Martin has given us a study

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of two modern religious poems, Hopkins' "The Wreck of the Deutschland" and T. S. Eliot's "Ash Wednesday." This small volume reminds one more of the poetic studies of a past era than of those of the present. The Canon eschews professional literary criticism and professes his aim as follows: "My hope is that, under God, these slight essays may serve to open some doors of understanding and appreciation for some who may have turned aside from these poems as being not for them, and that the truth about God and man which is so gloriously and movingly expressed may enter into them and make them free."

Unquestionably, the author does open "some doors of understanding and appreciation" of these poems. His method, however, is somewhat eclectic in choosing passages and phrases for explanation and in omitting others of equal importance. In checking the explanations of lines and phrases in "The Wreck of the Deutschland," I looked for information on the reference to Martin Luther in the twentieth stanza and on the words "unshapeable shock night" in the twenty-ninth stanza. Consideration of Luther and of the word "shock" was omitted entirely.

A few errors of fact and interpretation in the treatment of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" arise from the Canon's unfamiliarity with Roman Catholic doctrine and practice. For example, he refers to Hopkins' career in the Jesuit Order after his two years of novitiate as follows: "For the next seven years, while he was working as parish priest . . ." (p. 18). Hopkins actually was not ordained to the priesthood until 1877, seven years later. Again, in referring to the line "Months earlier, since I had our sweet reprieve and ransom/Tendered to him" in "Felix Randal," the author explains "Our sweet reprieve and ransom" as referring to "Holy Unction and Holy Communion" (p. 24). Hopkins' administration of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction occurred later, as stated in the phrase "Being anointed and all." "Our sweet reprieve and ransom" can only signify either Holy Communion alone or the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion.

On p. 71 the author explains the passage, in the final stanza of the poem, ". . . our King back, oh, upon English souls!/Let him easter in us . . ." in somewhat of an "applied sense." Hopkins is evidently referring here to conversion to the Roman Catholic Church. (For corroboration of this point, confer "Henry Purcell" and the letters to his family and friends at the time of his own conversion.)

Canon Martin manifests a genuine understanding of a poet of Hopkins' type in the following passage: "Hopkins was, at one and the same time, a poet and a religious; he possessed the poet's seeing eye, tingling imagination, and speaking tongue, and he possessed also a Jesuit's rigid self-discipline and unwavering convictions. That tension always existed; and it is from that tension, as from the striking together of two unyielding flints, that the glory and passionate depth of his poetry proceeds" (p. 19).

"Hidden quotation" and allusion, which Canon Martin explains in his introduction to "Ash Wednesday" (p. 86), are favorite techniques of Eliot. The author, therefore, takes up many of these quotations and allusions in the poem from, e.g., the Bible, Dante, and Cavalcanti, and thus provides much help for the ordinary reader.

Mastery and Mercy, an excellent title, evidences the writer's long meditation upon these two important poems and shows that this meditation has produced

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in himself a deep understanding of the minds and characters of both Hopkins and Eliot. His book fulfills its purpose and will be helpful to many lovers of poetry to whom each of the poems has been considered a closed door.

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NORMAN WEYAND, S.J.

Praise Deserved

Thomas Quercy. By Stanislas d'Otreumont. Paris: Gallimard.

SELDOM does a new novel receive such superlative praise as has been lavished on *Thomas Quercy* by critics of diverse backgrounds and faiths, both in France and in Belgium. Almost without exception, the critics have hailed this twentieth-century "search for the Absolute" a masterpiece destined to survive.

Thomas Quercy, a materially successful man of about thirty years, makes the simultaneous discovery that he has but three years to live and that he is, for the first time in his life, really in love. The novel is the account by Quercy of these three years during which he tries to replace mere duration of existence by intensity in living.

D'Otreumont's novel is not without defect. The victory of love over death may be too romantic a conclusion. The first person narration is a form difficult to sustain for over three hundred pages without tedium. Some of the long philosophical reflections and metaphysical meditations do hamper the progress of the action. Not a few of the surprise incidents intended to relieve the lengthy account seem unnaturally sudden. But the novel's many and genuine merits far outweigh these possible failings.

Historically, *Thomas Quercy* is a bright light in darkness. After the abundance of gloom, abnormality, absurdity, and nausea, both physical and metaphysical, in fiction of recent decades, d'Otreumont's beautiful act of faith in the dignity and nobility of human nature is spiritually refreshing. It is refreshing, too, to meet a novelist who respects his readers and knows how to hold their attention without uncovering one moral sewer after another.

Thomas Quercy may be reread with profit. Such a tribute can be paid honestly to only a minority of novels. The poetry of many of the descriptive passages is one reason why d'Otreumont's prose repays a second reading. But the supreme merit in Quercy's long meditation—in which he rediscovers himself and the world, shakes off religious indifference, and is led, after Pascalian intuitions, to the threshold of active faith—is that the reader becomes involved in a creative examination of himself and is rewarded by intermittent flashes of intellectual enlightenment on the truly mysterious nature of man. Perhaps, as a sensitive and perspicacious American critic has claimed, the novel can claim to be an art form worthy of serious consideration only if it provides such flashes of intellectual enlightenment on the mystery of man.

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